An Impossible Equation?

- Renegotiating Motherhood in Post-Transition Spain

Licentiate Thesis in Social Anthropology
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A Short Note of Thanks…

To my supervisors Britt-Marie Thurén and Lisa Åkesson. For support, constructive critique, endless stimulating discussions…for bearing with me! You are simply the best – both of you!

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To my friends and family out there – for helping me to stay in touch with reality, for all the joy you give…

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And to all of you…

….beware…there is a PhD on its way…….:o)

Sammanfattning

Sedan Spaniens övergång till parlamentarisk demokrati (1976-82) har spanska kvinnor, under loppet av en generation, gått från att vara självklart värderade i sin roll som hemmafruar till att dela sin tid mellan osäkra anställningar och ett ifrågasatt hemmafruskap. Den officiella socialdemokratiska jämställdhetspolitiken har haft som främsta mål att främja kvinnors massiva inträde på arbetsmarknaden, men att skapa materiella förutsättningar för att kombinera lönearbete med moderskap har aldrig varit ett prioriterat område. Trots det, vill kvinnor fortfarande bli mammor, och moderskap fortsätter att vara en kraftfull symbol, om än utmanad, på grund av dess koppling till Franco-regimen. De motsägelsefulla kulturella föreställningar som omger moderskapet lämnar kvinnor i ett limboliknande tillstånd, i vilket de konstant tvingas att omförhandla idéer och praktiker knutna till genus och moderskap. De uttrycker osäkerhet, oförmåga och stress, inte minst i sin position som mödrar. I denna uppsats placerar jag mitt etnografiska material (insamlat i Valencia, Spaniens tredje största stad, under 2005-7) inom ramen för de debatter om makt och agens, som förs inom feministisk antropologi, samtidigt som jag visar på betydelsen av den individualistiska diskurs som springer ur det neoliberala paradigmet. Begreppsliga verktyg som *kulturell förhandling* och *kulturella projekt* används för att identifiera makt, därför att dessa verktyg tillåter ett överskridande av motsättningen mellan den postmodernistiska analysens frigörande potential och behovet av materialistisk-politisk analys. Med denna ansats syftar jag till att undgå sådana slutsatser som reaktion eller backlash, och istället nå en förståelse av hur ”demokratins döttrar” konstruerar sin frigörelse i spänningsfältet mellan diskursiv jämställdhet och materiell och praktisk ojämställdhet.

Contents

On my first stay in the Valencian neighborhood Benituria, I met “the orange man”, a proud Beniturian in his mid 70´s, who stood in his garage, selling boxes of oranges. We came to talk about the rapid changes in Spanish society, of which he was rather critical. I did not meet him again until the year after when the oranges were ripe. On this occasion, one of his nieces dropped by to say hello and get some oranges. She parked her car outside, rushed in, grabbed some fruit, kissed her uncle on the cheek and was gone before we had the opportunity to be introduced. It became a relevant illustration of what I and her uncle had talked about, the lack of time of the younger generation (women in particular), based on somewhat erroneous priorities (from the elderly man´s perspective). He told me that this niece had gone back to work when her son was a few months old, pumping milk from her breasts in the morning before work. He shook his head and said “that is not right”. Among my informants, there were women who had done exactly that. Without ever putting their children in second place, they worked hard to live up to the new double-edged expectations of bread winning. Having met an infinite number of women who in different ways put their children first, but never felt that they did right or enough, I could not agree with this man´s indignation. This thesis is an attempt to narrate a more complex story about a generation of women who struggle each day to find a middle ground between dependent caring and independent earning. If given the possibility to earn.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

In the recent decades gender relations in Spain have undergone fundamental changes (del Valle et al 2002). During the Franco regime (1939-1975) gender complementarity was the norm, and Motherhood was the trope from which this ideal of gender difference emanated. After the dictatorship ended in 1975, a transition period[1] followed in which parliamentary democracy was implemented and consolidated. At this period in time, faith in the future was strong and "progressive" was a common political self-labeling, which in theory also implied equality between the sexes (Thurén 1988). However, debates were polarized. Gender was a mine field, in the sense that the prospect of women stepping out of the home to engage in work on a grand scale was for progressives seen as a necessary step, whereas people who might today be labeled conservatives perceived it as a potential threat to stability and children´s well-being. In 1986 Spain entered the European Union which increased integration into a globalized world economy.

At the time of my field work (2005-2007), equality between women and men was part of a mainstream discourse, meaning that the label *progressive* was no longer necessarily, or even commonly, attached to those who saw – or claimed to see - men and women as equals. Laws and regulations were far-reaching (also from a Northern European perspective), and the generation of women investigated, was perceived by many elderly people as having got it all, a bit spoilt, and egoistic. However, practices pointed in another direction, for example the material conditions for combining motherhood and work were almost nonexistent, despite the existence of a conciliation law[2] (Astelarra 2005). This implied a gap between on the one hand understandings of gender equality as already realized, and on the other hand, the practical difficulties of combining motherhood with wage labor. The gap was strongly reflected in negotiations on motherhood. Many of the women I met during field

[1]There is no consensus in regard to when the transition ended. Its completion has been variously said to be marked by the Spanish Constitution of 1978, the failure of an attempted coup on February 1981, or the electoral victory of the Spanish Socialist Worker´s Party (PSOE) on 28 October 1982.

[2] *Ley conciliación vida familiar y laboral*, web page http://www.ati.es/spip.php?article191 and http://noticias.juridicas.com/base_datos/Laboral/l39-1999.html.The law was adopted in 1999, with the aim to facilitate the combination of salaried work and family responsibilities and contained – among other things – working time reduction with a proportional salary decrease, extended leave days for adoption of a child or illness of a close relative and offered fathers the opportunity to share maternity leave. However, as argued by Elena Stepanova, "...it did not alter the traditional roles of women and men, thus making women the primary users of these policies..." (Stepanova 2010:1). The law was followed up by a series of other laws, between 2001 and 2005, and in 2007 "The Law for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men" was adopted, with the aim to correct for the gender blindness of the first conciliation law (ibid).

work in the neighborhood Benituria[3], Valencia, were stressed and anxious. They expressed feelings of doubts and insecurities, not least in their role as mothers.

In my work I argue that their (sense of) stress was partly a consequence of failing material conditions, such as lacking trustworthy day care, too short parental leave and a social security system that discriminated against women. However, my material also showed that it was about ambiguous cultural norms, which indicates that Spain had not left its transition phase in gender related matters. There were tensions in mothering discourses and practices, in which could be found firstly traces of a familial tradition where The Mother was the safe core around which the family and the nation revolved, secondly an individualism which was increasingly including the female gender, and thirdly socialist ideas reminiscent of the transition that had taken place one generation before my field work. My findings resonate with anthropologist Heather Paxson, who has investigated motherhood in urban Greece, and writes "…I do not view recent changes as a replacement of old ways by new ones. Rather, I hear in…///…women´s life narratives attempts to make sense of a continuous, inconsistent cultural change…" (Paxson 2004:8). It is this (seemingly paradoxical) inconsistent continuity that I aim to describe and analyze in my work.

1.2 Aim

This thesis explores renegotiations and re-enactments of motherhood in contemporary urban Spain against the background of the stress many women expressed. Empirically it focuses on the following themes:

- The (impossible) conciliation of motherhood and work.
- Tensions and negotiations around the *when* and the *how* to *become* a mother (timing, becoming pregnant, giving birth, breast-feeding).
- Tensions around notions of *how* to *be* a *proper* mother.

By exploring these themes in my ethnography, I aim to theoretically touch upon the issue of power, central to feminist anthropology, with the overarching central research question:

- How did women account for and cope with the gap between discursive equality and practical inequality?

[3] The name is a pseudonym, as are all names of informants and places mentioned in the thesis.

In discussing this question I also explore how the women's approaches to the dilemmas that seemed unsolvable reflect back on discourse. In other words: In what ways can they be seen as agents, not just acting upon what is (not) being given to them, but also producing discourse?

1.3 Restudy

The study, the results of which are partly discussed in this thesis, takes as starting point Professor Britt-Marie Thurén´s investigation of the same *barrio* from 1982. She had shown how the progressive discourse was impregnated by possibility, and among women the attitude was that if one wants something one can get it (Thurén 1988). Those were extraordinary times in Spain, and the speed at which societal changes occurred lacks comparison in a European perspective. As pointed out by the Spanish journalist Rosa Montero (1996), many of the social changes that in other European countries had taken a century to implement and integrate, took place in just 20 intense years. A re-study of Benituria 25 years later when a new political system had been stabilized, consolidated, "normalized" seemed a good opportunity to investigate what had happened in the wake of these changes.[4] Thus, Thurén returned to the *barrio* and her former research subjects, now entering the grandmother period of life, accompanied by a younger anthropologist (myself), who was to investigate the younger generation of women, now in the phase of life corresponding to the one that was the focus of Thurén´s first study.

The positive value of forming part of a restudy is that it has helped me to put the contemporary discourse and practice into a longitudinal perspective. It is rare in anthropology, and makes possible the study of change, which is vital to feminist theorizing, in which tradition I position my research. The continuous co-work and discussions with an anthropologist of the previous generation, has given my material an analytical depth, which would otherwise have been impossible.

[4]The concept of re-study, and the question of whether it is an oxymoron in anthropology, has been much debated. Here, let me just refer to Janet Heaton´s Reworking Qualitative Data (2004). Heaton defines two types of re-studies in anthropology: one in which the original research is challenged by independent researchers and one (which is apt here) where the follow-up research is based on published findings to assess social change, and not aiming at verifying the original research.

1.4 Theoretical framework, Concepts and Research Contribution

This study is inspired by and based on several research traditions. First and foremost it is formed by the field of gender studies, specifically feminist anthropology, and its debates on power.

Power relations have always been and continue to be central to feminist anthropology, but the fast growing number and diversity of ethnographic accounts have clarified that it is difficult to compare or even recognize power, and thus called for new tools for analysis (Mukhopadhyay and Higgins 1988). The concept of *cultural negotiations*, developed by among others Professor Ulf Hannerz (1992), has been defined among feminist researchers as vital to identifying power. It allows for a transgression of the contradiction between the liberating potential of postmodernist analysis and the need for not losing sight of material-political conditions (di Leonardo 1991, Liddle and Wright 2001, Thurén 2002), which means that "structural" (economic-political) power is negotiated in people´s everyday lives, and ends up meaning different things to different (categories of) people. Gender, ethnicity, class, etc, signify unequal possibilities of both interpreting and making use of a certain law or a certain economic dictate. Therefore, the degree to which one takes part in cultural negotiations becomes a way to "measure" power (Thurén 1998). Feminist ethnography thus needs to identify fora for these negotiations, and analyze who does what, how and when, in which forum, to reach an understanding of how gendered selves are produced, negotiated, changed, reproduced in these arenas. By employing this approach, I have aimed to escape the notions of backlash or reaction to reach an understanding of how "the daughters of democracy" construct their liberation, in the tension between discursive equality and material and practical inequality. It is also unavoidable here to mention the concept of *agency*[5], to discuss whether and how gendered power can be undermined by individual maneuvers *within* given norms (Abu-Lughod 1990, Butler 1990, Morris 1995). Herein lies the assumption that the individual (woman in this case) is not "solely" or "simply" oppressed but has a certain maneuvering space to gain from a system. Sherry Ortner´s theorization of agency in terms of "cultural projects" is another apt approach here. Ortner talks about "…an agency of projects – that the less powerful seek to nourish and protect by creating or protecting sites, literally or metaphorically…"(Ortner 2006: 145-46), and further that these cultural projects will "…infuse life with meaning and purpose…" through which

[5] I here refer to agency in its broader meaning. It goes beyond traditional feminist interpretations of agency as solely open resistance and – instead - tries to identify space of maneuvering within a given system, in this case a gendered order.

"…people seek to accomplish valued things within a framework of their own terms their own categories of value…" (ibid:145). This resonates perfectly with how I came to interpret motherhood in the particular time and particular space that was Benituria 2006.

Both the idea about cultural negotiations as sites of power production and the concept of cultural projects as agency, combine easily with concepts like *habitus* and *doxa*, central to practice theory (Bourdieu 1977, Connell 1987, 1999, Lovell 2000, Moi 1991). Practice theory, developed by Pierre Bourdieu, and "gendered" in the works of feminist theorists (Moi 1991, Adkins & Skeggs 2005)[6], have helped in seeing the intertwinement of the material and the discursive, that they are inseparable, yet (sometimes) have to be analysed separately. In my work, this is done by spelling out material conditions, showing how they contribute to women´s stress, and - in the other end – pronouncing normative discourses around proper motherhood, and then showing how they are connected, by a neo-liberal paradigm, grounded in both the material and a prescriptive individualist discourse, perpetuated by everyday language. Here I use Marilyn Strathern´s work on the Western individual as well as Stevi Jackson´s theorizing of the self, to complement modernist theorists such as Anthony Giddens.

The concept of power cannot go unaccompanied by the concept of discourse, which can mean "a particular way to talk about and understand the world (or part of the world)" (Winther Jörgensen & Phillips 1999:9). In a broader sense, it has come to mean social practice, which "…implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s) and social structure(s) which frame it. A dialectical relationship is a two-way relationship: the discursive event is shaped by situations, institutions and social structures, but it also shapes them…" (Fairclough & Wodak 1997:258). For my purposes the first definition is apt: since my aim is to show that in texts (documents of law, etc) and political speech as well as in everyday understandings Spain has come a long way towards realizing gender equality, whereas in my informants´ day to day practices, it seems very far away. However, the second definition quoted here, allows for a transgression of discourse and practice, and leaves room for a description of how practices also shape discourse. By *culturally negotiating* the actions repeated on a daily bases, the women I met in Benituria enjoy a certain agency, a particular form of power if you will, that I will show, help perpetuate a system they *say* they are opposed to.

[6] Bourdieus´s own work was in many cases blind to gender differences and differentiations.

There are an immense number of studies on what has been termed *the double work load*, meaning women´s entry into the paid work force combined with a continued domestic responsibility. These types of (mostly European) work- care- and time studies have been realized within the fields of sociology and political science/law, counting hours dedicated to work/domestic tasks, etc, or assessing labor laws. Without calling into question the relevance of their analysis, I use American feminist philosopher Nancy Fraser to argue that concepts like work, care, and time need to be de-constructed in themselves. Showing empirically how these concepts are perceived and valued and how they vary from one historical time to another, from one cultural context to another, is vital to a feminist analysis.

In the Spanish context investigated by me, that seems divided between on the one hand familial bonds as the core of society and on the other hand obsessions with "modern" individuals - a legacy of the socialist transition and neoliberal[7] winds mixed and mashed in public discourse – a concept that called for close attention was *confianza*.[8] Literally meaning "trust", it was usually mentioned by my informants in connection with family, seen as the guarantor of material (and other) security but also to be trusted with care and love, always supposed to be acting in the best interests of other members of the family unit. This gave me reason to think further on the lack of - for example - state day care, and to ask whether this was solely about unwillingness on part of politicians, or could be linked to the discourse on *confianza*.

Thus, my anthropological contribution here is to point to various cultural imageries that – interwoven with neoliberal (economic) discourses - may have contributed to why Spain "lags behind", despite the fact that women say that they want to work for a salary AND be mothers. Here, it has been necessary to both use and problematize the public/domestic dichotomy, and for this I lean on Soledad Murillo´s analytical distinction of domestic/private. To interpret women´s gendered strategies as classed, I have built on Beverly Skeggs´ work on the intersection of class and gender. Her work is based on Pierre Bourdieu´s conceptual tools, but is more elaborated in the aspect of gender.

[7] Among the infinite amount of definitions of the term *neoliberalism*, I have chosen to look into how anthropologists use the term. Mathieu Hilgers states that "…they apply the term to a radicalized form of capitalism, based on deregulation and the restriction of state intervention, and characterized by an opposition to collectivism, a new role for the state, an extreme emphasis on individual responsibility, flexibility, a belief that growth leads to development, and a promotion of freedom as a means to self-realization that disregards any questioning of the economic and social conditions that make such freedom possible…" (Hilgers 2011:352).
[8] The complexity of the Spanish concept *confianza* – including its gendered nature – is expanded on by Thurén (1988).

1.5 Ethnographic Setting

In this section, I will shortly outline the historical and political developments in contemporary Spain that I find relevant for the themes in my thesis, followed by glimpses from the neighborhood, where the main part of field work was conducted. The glimpses are mainly to illustrate the immense transformation and gentrification[9] the barrio has gone through in the time lapse between the field work of Thurén and my own ditto. It is relevant both for the sake of ethnographic honesty, and for the sake of analyses, but the aim is also to give the reader a vivid insight into my informants´ daily environment. As will be shown in the next section, my informant cluster was more diversified than that of Thurén and I have detected certain differences that I interpret as classed, in how women account for and deal with the gap between official feminist discourses and what is really possible in women´s lives.

1.5.1 Spain, Gender and Politics

As opposed to many other European countries, Spain embarked on its journey towards a general state financed welfare system rather late in the 20th century. Its trajectory has many similar traits to that of Portugal, which also went from dictatorship to parliamentary democracy in the late 1970´s (Pinto 2010:115-116). The first political steps taken by the socialist government, installed after the 1982 elections[10], were taken in times of global economic recession when the world had already started to look for neoliberal tools to meet the economic crises. Thus, a full-fledged welfare state in the Keynesian meaning of the word never came to be implemented in Spain (Sebastián 2000).

When Francisco Franco died in 1975, radical forces had for a long time prepared the road to democracy. Feminists had among other things infiltrated the house wives organizations (Radcliff 2002) and came to be influential in the socialist party from the start. This contributed to gender equality being one of the first areas to be addressed when PSOE (see note 1) came to power. However, the child care issue, which was so salient in my material and thus mirrored in my research questions, was not a part of the feminist agenda. Sociologist Celia Valiente attributes this to the fact that during Franco´s authoritarian rule, motherhood was *the* trope around which all discourses of womanhood revolved. When the dictatorship fell, with the death of Franco, feminism was focused on women´s civil rights, such as reproductive control (for example the right *not* to have children or *few* children) and the work against male violence. Child care was too connected to motherhood, which was in

[9] Transformation of a city´s centrally placed but socially marginalized- and working class dominated areas in cities into middle class areas (Lilja 2011).
[10] During the transition, 1977-1982, Union of the Democratic Centre, UCD, was in government.

turn impregnated by fascist definitions of femininity/womanhood, for feminists to address it and appear credible (Valiente 2002:65). So, parental leave and child care were never ranked high on the list of reforms and neither the socialist government in office during my time of field work (2005-2007), did prioritize this policy area, but focused on others. It had passed acts on same-sex marriage, reinforced the legislation on gender based work discrimination and (sexual) harassment and changed the abortion laws (REF!). In contrast to this, the difficulties of conciliating motherhood and paid employment expressed by my informants is one of the main themes appearing in my material, and is explored in detail in chapter two.

The political landscape in Spain is dominated by PSOE (see note 1) and conservative PP (*Partido Popular*). Since the Spanish entry into the EU, in 1986, PSOE has pursued a neoliberal economic program, alongside a liberal agenda on issues like religion and sexuality. When I was in Benituria, PSOE´s José Luís Rodríguez Zapatero was in office, and his stand on gender was clear and forceful: a department on gender issues was launched and a quota for 50% women in government[11]. PP is a highly conservative party, containing remnants of the Falangists, who ruled with Franco, and in close alliance with the Catholic Church. When this is written, they are in office again, with a program on abolishing gay marriage and restricting the abortion law.

Valencia (city and region) has long been a strong foothold for PP. The mayor, Rita Barberá, in office since 1991, is immensely popular among her voters and equally hated among her opponents, who accuse her of spending all money on appearances, while allowing public services to fall apart. The costly Pope visit in 2006 was one of Barberá´s projects, criticized by most of my informants. Other spectacular investments are *El Oceanográfico* (an enormous aquarium) and the hosting of America´s Cup, which in my interpretation represent the modern, a symbol of Valencia being a legible part of the EU, ready to compete on equal terms with other "highly developed" and "modern" countries, embracing the neoliberal economy. The Pope´s visit, on the other hand, symbolizes the old values of family and Catholic belief, which should not be lost in the process. In contrast, Rita Barberá´s alleged lesbian life style is referred to by many of my informants, and definitely used by her political opponents, for example in connection with the Pope visit, with a text on pins and t-shirts that said "Rita – does the Pope know about you?". Hypocrisy was a term used in this context,

[11] Spain´s focus – under Zapatero - on the issue of gender equality has been widely referred to in other European countries; for an example see http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7375230.stm.

something which the generation I worked with tried to distance themselves from, as one of several ways to distinguish oneself from the parents´ generation.

1.5.2 The Barrio, Gentrification and Politics

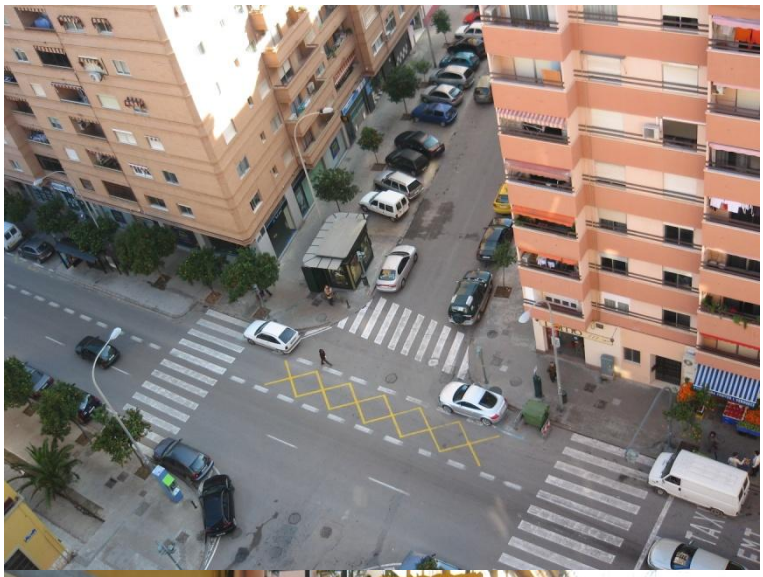
Benituria is situated between the city centre of Valencia, *la huerta* and the sea. It is the last *barrio* of the city; this is where the city ends. 25 years earlier, when Thurén embarked on her field work, Benituria was a different story. The ones of my informants who were born in the barrio, or arrived as small children, recalled buying fresh milk from the closest farm and picking fresh flowers in *la huerta* – the fertile reddish soil that used to surround the city of Valencia and adjacent villages, and supply its inhabitants with rice, all kinds of vegetables and citrus fruits. With time, industrialization and the construction boom (the latter fuelled by immense corruption), had slowly pushed aside the rich small-scale agriculture and what remained was mostly monocultures of oranges. Some families and smaller business units had managed to keep small pieces of land and continued to cultivate them.

One generation before my field work, playing in the streets was a common way for children to pass the time. Also the adults spent more time in the streets than was habitual at the time of my study. For example, the old village tradition of bringing your chairs out to the street at night, to chat with your neighbors and eat a joint simple meal, certainly had applied to Benituria. In 2006 you saw very little of this. MariSol had worked hard on

reintroducing the village tradition of eating in the street. She had succeeded to a certain extent, but during the summer I was in Valencia, the neighbors came together only twice. She complained about it and speculated about the reason for her difficulties: people were stressed and had many trajectories to follow in their lives. Many had summer residences, relatives in other parts of the country who expected visits, trips they wanted to make.

Benituria´s rapid transformation manifested itself in all kinds of ways. In 25 years the growth had been enormous, and the core of typical white washed village houses was surrounded by big tower blocks. The gentrification was a fact, even though during my period in the barrio, it was still very much a mixed neighborhood, and describing the area in terms of class and political affiliation is difficult. Around 1990 two new university campuses had been constructed between Benituria and the sea. This closeness to the university had marked the *barrio* in several aspects. Flat prices were steadily rising, and they were a topic on everybody´s lips. Even though most bars were traditionally Spanish with fluorescent lamps, football on TV, litter and cigarettes on the floor, and the quite greasy tapas, "modern" bars and restaurants were gaining in number and popularity. They usually served something called *cocina creativa*, which was basically tapas but made with less fat and more varied. The lights were dimmed and often there were candles on the table. Instead of the sound of a television set, you could listen to the latest music, either from the loudspeakers or live. In the *barrio* there was also a vegetarian restaurant. Other obvious signs of a growing middle class were a number of interior design shops, most of them expensive. When I was about to leave Benituria, "Spa and coffee" was inaugurated, a combined café and sauna where you could get facial- and other beauty treatments. The English name was symptomatic of the status that knowledge of the English language brought, as was the fact that many parents let their children take English as an extra-curricular activity.

On the old main street were small shops, bars and the like. Here were located a hip hair salon, whose owner became an informant, the barrio´s only book store, the school where I and some of my informants and their children practiced dancing and *pilates*, and the café where I always bought freshly grounded coffee. Here, some people also sold fruit and vegetables in the entrances of their homes, fresh and recently picked on their (usually small) pieces of land. This was the street of the yearly food party of the barrio when the bars moved out and cooked paellas and tapas right there on the spot. This street ended in the current main street, much busier and more heavily trafficked and surrounded by big tower blocks. Here you could find a pharmacy, bars, china shops, restaurants, clothing stores, two big super markets, vegetable shops, a couple of bread shops, a petrol station.



Despite all the signs of gentrification, many traditional ways of living lingered, of which the *fiestas* were the most conspicuous. Several of them were religious, or it would not have been Valencia. Like most Valencians, Beniturians celebrate *Fallas*[12]. One week in March the city and the barrio explodes in music and fireworks. The noise is deafening, it is impossible to sleep. The explosion has colours too, in the form of flowers and the absolutely enchanting dresses that are worn by girls and women. The dresses are expensive and some of my informants tried hard to resist their daughters´ begging for a new dress each year. Fortunately, at least the dresses could be worn also on other *fiesta* occasions (as below in the *Festa Clavaris* in September when Benituria celebrates its patron saints).

[12] For more on *Fallas* see http://www.donquijote.org/culture/spain/society/holidays/las-fallas.asp.

Other blasts from the past were some businesses. The hostess of my first lodging showed me *La Cooperativa*. It was a cooperative funded in the 1910´s, which sold groceries, fresh cheese and meat. It was open only in the mornings and when closing time at one was approaching the small shop became crowded. There was no sign outside, nothing indicating the existence of a shop inside. You simply had to know of it. Shopping here took a lot of time but was very entertaining. The men who worked in the shop were in their 60´s – 70´s and mastered the art of bickering.

These lingering of traditional institutions, businesses and to a certain extent values may seem to crash with the symbols and practices that distinguish a gentrified area. However, this is what a gentrification process is; it has these many contradicting symbols and manifestations. The wealthier middle class who are new to the area may well appreciate and call for the preservation of old buildings and small scale, traditional businesses, as well as express dismay at the transformation – what many call the destruction – of *la huerta*. Native inhabitants, on the other hand, may well speak of the same process as just *progress* or *development*.[13]

Election patterns of the barrio were complex. Taken as a whole Benituria was conservative (in line with Valencia as a whole) in the sense that PP got most votes. In the older parts of the *barrio* lived many elderly people, previously rural *labradores*, who immigrated to Benituria in the industrialization/urbanization period in the 1960s-1970s. These, contrary to the (also to a certain extent immigrating) *trabajadores*, had always voted

[13] For a more elaborated discussion on the complexity of the gentrification process, see "Den segregerade staden" (Lilja 2001).

conservative[14]. To a certain extent the election patterns could be attributed to the very different positions people held towards the Catholic Church. The *labradores* had been, and continued to a large extent to be believers, some also practitioners. PSOE´s relationship with the church had not ever been warm, and became even frostier when Zapatero took over the leadership of the party and made sure to move its politics on gender- and sexuality issues in a more progressive direction. According to my friend in the neighborhood association, PSOE got most of its votes in the barrio among the doctors and lawyers, the upper middle class and reasonably young people who generally bought into the liberal policy pursued by PSOE, emphasizing gender equality, gay rights, etc. As in most European countries social democracy in Spain had embraced a rather neoliberal position in terms of economic politics and a liberal one in terms of social and cultural issues.

As to ethnicity, Benituria was relatively "white", although people with none-Spanish origin could be seen in the street. Female immigrants (from Eastern Europe or Latin America) worked in the barrio as domestics. The family in the apartment below mine had a girl working for them five days a week. I sometimes met her in the elevator, rushing to get home to her baby. She lived in a poorer *barrio*, not far from Benituria. At the end of my stay in Benituria, when I ran into her one day, she was happy. She had got her residence papers, and was planning to leave the family where she worked, to study or to get another job. The family had offered to raise her salary, eager to keep her with them. Other immigrants were shop keepers, and some begged for money outside the shops. "None-whites" residing in the *barrio* were rather rare. This showed not least outside the schools in the afternoon. The municipal school was the only school where women in *hijabs* were waiting to pick their children up, and this school´s dubious reputation was partly attributed to the (relatively) high attendance of children of immigrants. There were altogether five schools in the barrio, of which three were public (one municipal and two state run), and two were run by the Catholic Church. The two state run schools offered the choice of education in the Valencian language, which was regaining its popularity[15].

1.6 Field Work and Informants

1.6.1 Field Work

The field work period started with a five week reconnaissance stay in the autumn 2005, during which I rented a room from a woman in her early fifties and whose life I came to

[14] *Labradores* are people working the land – employed by landowners – whereas *trabajadores* is a general term for workers or can specifically mean working in industries.
[15] Valencian is a variety of the Catalan language.

share: joint meals, excursions, TV-nights, church visits, yoga classes, only to mention a few of our activities. She seemed to know all parts of the *barrio* and loads of people, to whom she introduced me. These five weeks proved invaluable to me later on and this landlady´s home continued to be a safe haven to which I could escape when field work was proving difficult and despair overwhelmed me.

On coming back to do the long-term field work, I decided not to live-in, but to rent an apartment. One reason for this choice was that I wanted to have the possibility to invite informants to my home for interviews or informal visits. The apartment was located on the 12th floor in the newer parts of the *barrio*. For obvious reasons, this was not by far as sociable a way of living, compared with the white washed two-storey-house where I spent my pre-field work visit. I socialized a bit with my closest neighbors, on the same floor, but for the rest the socializing was limited to accidental meetings in the elevator. On weekdays I met people on their way to work or school and on Sundays, parents with their dressed up children - girls in fancy dresses and boys in suits - on their way to family lunches. Most were curious about my doings in Benituria and quite a few assumed that I was an English teacher. It was obvious from the way people dressed and talked that the inhabitants of the house were quite well off middle class people with decent careers and incomes.

The main part of field work was conducted from January to December in the year of 2006. In August, the hottest month, I took a break and went home to Sweden. In 2007 I went back to Benituria for about a month, which concluded the phase of physical field work. With a few of my informants I have stayed in touch via e-mail.

My project comprised classical anthropological field work during one year, divided in four periods. I lived in the *barrio* and interacted daily with its inhabitants: from the bread purchase in the morning to the belly dancing course in the evening, from shopping at the Friday market to the Sunday´s paella lunch, from association meetings to accompanying mothers (and occasionally a father) to pick up their kids from school, from visits to the hair-dresser (own or informants´) to a pregnant informant´s check-ups at the midwife´s. Some informants introduced me to their friends, which resulted in me hanging out with groups of women. One group usually met for a drink, while waiting for their children attending theatre class. Sometimes there were two of us, sometimes seven (depending on how many would allow themselves this social break instead of running off to do work or run errands), occasionally a father. This gave me an opportunity to contextualize my individual interviews with these particular women, and analyze their different ways of reasoning and acting in these quite diverse situations. MariSol, whom I got to know in *pilates* class, let me into her house

and her family life more than did others, maybe due to the fact that she lived in the old parts of Benituria, where there was more of interaction in the streets and the line between home and street was less clearly drawn[16]. Hanging out with her family and friends in the street (of which some became informants), gave additional contextualizing and continuity to my material. The schools were another arena in which I participated, got to know people and collected material. Apart from accompanying mothers on picking up their kids, I was invited to parents´ association meetings and social gatherings/parties with parents and children.

In addition, I conducted around 20 semi-structured individual interviews (lasting from one to four hours), using Thurén´s questionnaire from her first study, albeit a bit adapted in some parts. The interviews were realized in my home, or in the informant´s home. In the latter case, I got an insight into quite a few homes, to which I would not have been invited otherwise. Additionally, I carried out three group discussions, based on a number of ”dilemmas”, constructed by Thurén 25 years before. In this way we obtained a material for more direct comparison.[17] The generation of women investigated was in the same stage of life as those of Thurén in the original study, however older on an average[18]. Thurén went back to interview her old informants, of whom many were now grandmothers.

1.6.2 Informants

This section is an attempt to categorize my informants. This also includes a limited reflection on my own role as to why I came in contact with and got to work with precisely these groups of women and not other.

As already stated, Benituria at the time of my research was going through gentrification. When Thurén first came to work there in the beginning of the 1980´s, the area was populated by industrial- and farm workers. Some had worked the land in the area for generations. Some had moved in from other parts of Spain. Many industrial workers had escaped to Benituria from the gentrification of the city centre. There was in other words great variety in the population, but in regard to class, the area was much more homogenous than it was in 2006. Thurén´s informants were, to a large extent, housewives, but most of them self-identified as “progressives”, thus in favor of women´s right to supporting themselves by working outside the home. When I embarked on my anthropological odyssey, the social

[16] For an interesting analysis of the fluidity of the dichotomies domestic-public, *casa-calle*, see Francisco Sanchez Pérez beautiful book *La Liturgia del Espacio*.
[17] Some results of this were presented at the Spanish anthropology conference 2008: “´Hoy nadie se escandaliza de nada´: dilemas del orden de género”, published in *Feminismos en la antropología: nuevas propuestas críticas* (ed Hernández/Martin/Suárez), Congreso de Antropología, San Sebastian 10-13 september 2008.
[18] The reason for this is discussed in chapter 2.

heterogeneity of the *barrio* was obvious. I did not take a decision to include women from different economic, social and educational strata, rather it happened by itself. The issue of class[19] did not appear vital to include, until I came to interpret the gendered tensions around motherhood, and the equally gendered dilemma of the irreconcilability of work and motherhood, as classed. Thus, I had to settle for a way of defining class belonging in the multi-faceted Benituria of the time of my field work. Determining a woman´s/a family´s economic standing without explicit questions on salaries/inherited money/property etc (not advisable in my field, since money was a sensitive issue) was methodologically difficult. To ask questions about material investments in the home (which had been an indicator of economic standing in Thurén´s time) proved outdated. What I could ask about was education and – to a limited extent - political and religious affiliations/beliefs/convictions. These were relevant to the issue of class, but as the main entry to this methodological and analytical issue, I settled for British sociologist Beverly Skeggs´ (2004) analyses of taste as class marker in British society. Although there are immense differences in how class is played out in British and Spanish society, I argue that there are enough of similarities in European gentrification processes for her analyses to be relevant in Benituria[20].

My informants came from many different family backgrounds, but the major part would in their present lives count (and consider themselves) as middle class in terms of (own and partners´) education and type of work, income, children´s activities, and life style in a broader sense. Most of them did not do manual work and they did not consider themselves poor. In the following I describe an important aspect of what most of the women had in common (which I refer to as liberal leftism), after which follows a sub-categorization, based on life style and habits, which I refer to as *taste*.

The liberal left-winger – a common trait

My first concrete entry to the field was through the neighborhood association, a broad left wing movement that has existed since Franco times and focused on local issues. My interest in and experience from political activism made this an easy way in, and I was immediately invited to talk about my project. One of the board members asked one of her female relatives if she would consider becoming my informant, and that was how I got to know Alicia, my

[19] Please note, that class here is used as a descriptive category, not as an analytical tool. The reason for choosing class instead of social background is that the latter can be wrongly interpreted as something the "bearer" has left behind. I want to emphasize the continuity and all encompassing mode of class belonging.

[20] Consumption patterns enter here as well, and will be further elaborated on in one chapter in my forthcoming dissertation.

first, and in many aspects, key informant. She became my confident, with whom I met on a regular basis just to gossip, and who would always call to check on me, if she had not heard from me for a week.

My informants all belonged to a generation who were born or grew up just before or during the transition period, when Spain went from dictatorship to parliamentary democracy. Despite all other differences, most of them shared a left wing liberal perspective. In this way there was continuity with the *barrio´s* "progressive" inhabitants of Thurén´s investigation, with the difference that many of their opinions had now become main stream and were less challenged by conservative winds. I did not hear anyone refer to themselves as progressive during my year in Benituria (except in explicitly political contexts). To a great extent these women voted PSOE or IU (*Izquierda Unida*)[21], but not voting at all or voting PP also occurred. Contrary to among Thurén´s informants in the early eighties, there was now a strong disbelief in the political system and parties. So, rather than basing my perception of political beliefs on voting patterns, I listened closely to how the women expressed themselves on different matters. They were left wing in the sense that they – directly or indirectly – conveyed beliefs in a strong society and in defining themselves as - and expressing solidarity with "the workers" in a quite strict Marxist sense, even though not using that kind of explicit discourse. A majority also referred to themselves as *trabajadores*, were they white-collar workers or not. They were liberal in the sense that they did not question gay marriage, divorce or abortion, but that they did question and dislike the Catholic Church as an institution. They also almost exclusively defined themselves as non-believers and in many cases this was based on an anti-clerical position.

One group of women[22] whom I regularly met I would define as working class (even though middle class in terms of income) when it came to lifestyle and taste. They had "unqualified" jobs, and their husbands were blue-collar workers or similar. Their homes were clearly "maximalist", with TV and family pictures centrally placed. They liked to go out and party, often they would go out collectively, their men and (sometimes) children included. Most of them had their children in the municipal school. I perceived these women as more confident, as compared to the other groups. They had a way of acting, and a body language that I interpreted as confidence. They appeared to worry less about weight issues, and other aspects related to looks and bodies (Ambjörnsson 2004). They also appeared more secure in

[21] The United Left.
[22] Group is here referring to a) sub-category b) the fact that I sometimes met these women (of whom I knew and socialized with some on an individual basis) in group contexts.

their mothering roles. I am aware that this might be an over-interpretation, and Skeggs (1997) has shown that British working class women, despite what seems like confidence on the surface, internalize other people´s judgments and stereotyping. It may be that Benituria was still mixed to such an extent, that class oppositions did not become articulated, and thus class stigmatizing was not as current.

Another group I refer to as main stream middle class. One woman practiced *pilate*s, another read a lot about health and food, they were all in one way or another showing "body awareness". Their homes were clearly minimalist with rules regarding the children´s amount of TV hours, etc (Skeggs 2004). Their husbands were white collar workers, who liked to watch football in bars, as long as the bar was not too loud and chaotic. They placed great priority on their children, but in another way than did the working class crowd. They abstained from bar visits, because the environment was not child friendly. They signed their children up for theatre classes, arranged by a private party, outside of school arrangements (which was by far more expensive than the extra-curricular activities that most schools offer – and where in many cases parents themselves were involved as teachers/leaders). More than among others, I among them detected child care (and other areas in life) as a specialized practice, a theme I will elaborate on in the following chapters.

A third group I refer to as the alternative middle class. Here we find people who may abstain from owning a television set, and maybe cycle to work. At first glance women and men seemed to share equally house duties and child care. Their houses abounded with light and were well organized. Their children were calm and eloquent. They questioned the destruction of *la huerta* and the construction boom that had taken over Benituria and many other parts of Spain (and which by many was considered progress). One informant in this group said about herself and her friends "...let´s say that we are more European..."[23] These were people I easily identified with and gladly spent time with.

School choice could to a certain extent be used in the categorizing of informants, but was not water tight as parameter. For example, the interest in children learning the Valencian language, taught in some of the schools, ran partly through political affiliations and lifestyles. Also, the issue of religious education or not, was not easily reducible to class belonging or political beliefs. To some of my middle class informants, the Catholic Church did not vouch for a good education. They had looked for a "progressive" school, in the sense of secular and in the sense of teaching humanist values based on this secularism and they

[23] Thurén (1988) had discussed "The European Woman" as one ideal type of femininity at the time of her work. Obviously Europe was (still) used as a powerful metaphor for "modernity", for less "Spanishness".

were very outspoken about the negative effect a religiously based training could have on children. However, there were also non-believers who had not doubted at all to let their children attend a school run by clergymen. It was commonly said that the church run schools offered a higher education quality and, above all, better order and discipline.

One factor that seemed to influence school choice in consistence with class affiliation was the number of immigrants attending a school. Worried remarks about "many immigrants" and the importance of preserving "the Spanish" caused some, particularly those belonging to a well defined middle class stratum, not to place their children in the municipal school. This, accompanied by another discourse, common among my middle class informants, on the importance of learning about "other cultures" makes for a distinguishing marker of class belonging, and I interpret it as yet another expression of a globalization discourse (linked to a discourse on Europeanness mentioned above) that manifested itself in many different ways, among others in the wish to travel and see the world, and in signing the children up for language learning, as an extra-curricular activity. There were also those who placed their children in English-speaking schools. One informant commented on this, lifting her nose high to illustrate what kinds of people do this. "People of the upper classes?", I asked. "People who *want* to be of the upper classes", she corrected me.

Although my informant cluster turned out to be rather diversified, I wanted to also include conservative women. In efforts to find them, I attended church services on a few occasions and I asked around. Julia was the closest I got to a more conservative person. Her father was one of the *barrio´*s business owners, and the whole family was very committed to the traditional *fiestas*, were they religious or not. She defined herself as "a believer", although not "a practitioner" and had tried to sign her daughter up for the most religious school of the barrio. The reason she gave was however not religious – rather that they had a rich and varied schedule of extra-curricular activities, among others a football team for girls. She was very impressed by enterprises initiated by the mayor, such as *El Oceanográfico* (mentioned above), and gladly used a newly constructed playground, which was situated between two roads and had benches made of cement. This playground was rejected by another informant, intellectual and left-wing, who referred to the fact that the playground was mainly frequented by more right wing people.

In Julia´s case, the municipal school, which her daughter attended, was her last choice. I made a comment on the size of this school – big in comparison to others – and she misunderstood my remark for a negative one, and assured me that she and her daughter were both content. She added that "...but all kinds of people go there, it´s not like only...", leaving

out what kind of people she had in mind, whereas clarifying that she had "even" seen parents from the other side of the tramway drop their children off at this school[24]. She had been clear about which bakery she preferred to work in, and that the bakery situated in the more posh area was the one she liked the least. But she was very well aware of which side of the neighborhood that brought the most in status, and used it to convince me of the quality of the school.

My great difficulties at getting in touch with conservative women, I attributed to my position as a Swedish researcher with "progressive" opinions and lifestyle. However hard I tried to appear neutral, my being Swedish (still thought of in Spain as progressive) in itself certainly disqualified me in some contexts, as well as did my position as an academic.

1.7 Disposition of Thesis

I illustrate my argument around women´s (whether presently employed or not) expressed stress and anxieties in navigating motherhood, mainly by exposing three themes in the material, which are continuously linked to my overarching research question.

In the second chapter, my first research theme becomes most explicit. The (impossible) conciliation of motherhood and work is explored, by laying out the material conditions, the perceived lack of male collaboration, the dubious value of housewifery and a discussion of the time concept.

In chapter three discourses and practices on motherhood per se in Benituria are analyzed. First, my second research theme on tensions and negotiations around the *when* and the *how* to *become* a mother is in focus, followed by a section that lay out norms surrounding *how* one should *be* as a *proper* mother (third theme), describing varying perceived motherhood positions, in relation to motherhood as innate-learned (connected to the theme on specialization), individualism-collective (specifically familial) norms, responsibility/obligations-enjoyment, loneliness-meaningfulness, time, and finally in relation to fatherhood.

My overarching research question (How did women account for and cope with the gap between discursive equality and practical inequality?) is continuously related to the three research themes in both chapter two and chapter three.

[24] There is a tramway that runs straight through Benituria. There used to be a wall to prevent accidents, referred to in Thurén´s time, as "the class wall". Today, it is not referred to by people, but still the average income and education level is higher on the side of the tram street that Julia is referring to here.

In the fourth, concluding chapter, I sum up, and discuss my results in the light of my exploration of women´s position in the gendered power order, and their possible agency and part in reproducing that order, which in a way can be perceived as liberating.

2 The Impossible Equation

Gloria is stressed and tired. She is struggling to find an employment, and in the meantime she takes care of her family and their household. We are having coffee in a bar, talking about her dissatisfaction and worries, when Vicenta shows up, as always elegantly dressed, with make-up and hair in perfect shape. She looks tired though and, sinking down in a chair with a deep sigh, she says "...I can´t cope any more...I need a vacation...". Gloria gives her a look of compassion but replies immediately "...I need a job...".

This scene illustrates the dilemma that many Spanish women face: the difficulty of getting – and keeping – a job and the hardships of combining an employment (if obtained) with children and family life. Among my informants, I found a relative consensus on the stress caused by this combination, and when I mentioned the *conciliation law*[25], the reaction of the woman who burst into laughter, saying: "...it is we, the women, who constantly conciliate...at a high cost...", was quite representative. What she meant was that women do not get any help from the government, so that the whole responsibility for creating a functioning family life while also working is placed on the individual woman. The woman´s statement did not only establish that in Spain, one cannot expect any support from the state/government, but implicitly it also said that it is the women, not the men, who conciliate. This is in line with what sociologist Constanza Tobío has pointed out, that in Spain, work for women is conceptualized as a *choice;* women can choose to work should they *wish* to. Consequently, as argued by sociologist Teresa Torns (2000), female unemployment per se is not a prioritized area. Despite its outnumbering the male ditto by far, it is not generally viewed as a problem. At the same time, most of the women who participated in my study would agree that two incomes are necessary to support a family. As argued further by Tobío, the implicit norm here is that family responsibilities are not a choice, they are compulsory. Thus, it becomes the woman´s individual responsibility to conciliate the two, should she choose to work outside the home, "...the increasing female activity [employment] rate appears as a sort of indicator that they [the women] do manage, that the family-employment relationship poses no problem, that it is not a social problem to be assumed as such..." (Tobío 2001:344).

Some authors have argued that Spanish women with democracy gained status of civil citizenship, but not social ditto[26]. Women´s right to support themselves may have been

[25] See note 2.

[26] The complexity of the concept of social citizenship will not be expanded on here. I base myself on the following definition: "...women´s care giving activities are insufficiently recognised...///... by the social security and pensions systems...///... therefore women as actual and potential mothers will remain ´exiled as a group from full citizenship`..." (Threlfall and Cousins 2005:212).

high on the progressive agenda during the transition period (Thurén 1988) but was not consolidated in practice. This was very clear in my material. Women appeared secure in their civil rights, they did not question the right to abort, the right to divorce (even though divorce is rather rare), etc[27], but economically they conveyed feelings of great insecurity and stress. Therefore this chapter will discuss this stress, and relate it to what in much feminist research has been referred to as "the double burden" (Crompton 2006) - meaning motherhood and domestic/care work in combination with paid employment - both in terms of material conditions and in terms of cultural (changing) notions. Partnerships and relations with families of origin, etc, enter here as well. However, my analysis does not focus on the stress per se, but rather on the material conditions and cultural contradictions, which lead to this (perceived) time shortage and stress. Since many of my informants were simultaneously mothers/wives/responsible for the domestic sphere, and workers, obviously an analysis of "the double burden" is relevant to my material. But it is not enough, since the sense of stress is also located in the situation of not being employed or worries about losing a job, and further in less practical matters that have to do with less manifest parts of the changing gender system. This means that, parallel to describing a lack of material prerequisites, which no doubt lead to time constraints and stress, I aim to show that expressions of stress are also about different forms of dissatisfactions and insecurities – grounded in colliding cultural notions of gender – in women´s process of renegotiating motherhood.

Other researchers´ extensive theorizing of the double work load is based on empirical material from OECD countries (mostly Northern and Central European), that in several aspects differ from their Spanish counterpart. I argue that although this research is partly relevant to my material, it becomes misleading if not analyzed within the particularity of Spain´s history and culture (and to a certain extent the rest of Southern Europe). One concrete example of this particularity (just mentioned in passing here), is the fact that it has been difficult in Spain to set up a home of one´s own prior to getting married. Single households have been and are a rare phenomenon. This implies – and originates in – that everything revolves around the family and familial ideals, even for those who have not started

[27] Since my field work, Spain has gone through an "economic crisis", which has led to the Partido Popular being back in power, with an agenda that includes a more restricted legislation on abortion. But many other things have changed as well. For example, unemployment stands at 24.47 % in 2014 (http://www.tradingeconomics.com/spain/unemployment-rate) and many of the unemployed do not receive any compensation (see section 2.1). So stress and worries related to the economic situation have hardly diminished.

a family. At the same time, the birth rate in Spain is among the lowest in Europe[28]. As pointed out by Threlfall and Cousins (2005:209), the role of the family is on the one hand reinforced, due to young people´s dependence on their families of origin, on the other hand threatened, since forming new families is becoming increasingly difficult. Contrary to the Western/Northern European individualization of the family, theorized by Ulrich Beck and others, meaning the incorporation of "market values" into the family to the detriment of social (in this case familial) forms and norms, in Spain certain limited welfare developments have been accompanied by a reinforced importance of the family as provider of material and emotional support (ibid:208). The common usage of the word *confianza* in my material is a clear indicator of this, and is an equally clear example of one central contribution of this thesis: a demonstration that research on the double work load has to take cultural context into account.

The chapter is structured as follows: first, the material conditions for combining motherhood with work outside the home in Spanish society are laid out, by a discussion of first working hours and social citizenship and then day care arrangements. The topic of motherhood per se will be addressed in the following chapter, and will here serve merely as part of the analysis of perceptions and expressions of time shortage and stress. Thereafter follows one section on the dubious value of housewifery. In the sections the descriptions of lacking prerequisites are interweaved with an analyses of the strategies used by the women to cope. I have chosen the concept strategy in line with Tobío (2001), because her definition accommodates both social constraint and agency. However, there are problems with the concept which will be discussed in the chapter. Finally the material is linked to the time concept, via time-use research and its critics.

2.1 Material Conditions of Being a Mother, Part of a Family II: Social Citizenship and Working Hours

In some ways the Spanish welfare system resembles that of its neighboring Southern European countries, the system that has been labeled "rudimentary" by renowned welfare researcher Gösta Esping-Andersen (Crompton 2006), indicating that these nations are "behind" other European countries. Since this labeling is based on a Northern European norm, sociologist Christine Cousins argues that it is problematic to apply it to Southern Europe,

[28] In 2006 (when the main part of my field work was conducted) the average number of children per woman was 1.38, according to the Spanish National Institute of Statistics (INE).

without taking into account these states´ legacy of authoritarian dictatorships and their relatively few years of parliamentary democracy with possibilities of developing (and adapting) their welfare systems (Cousins 2005:55-56). In Spain the distinctiveness, in relation to Northern Europe, lies in the dual system of social protection. During Franco rule "social citizenship" - the right to receive social security and family benefits - was accorded only to men, as bread-winners and heads of families. This system has been resistant to change, and the Spanish welfare "...is still a marked dual system of social protection, which.../...reinforces unequal and stratified forms of social protection between men and women..." (ibid 2005:70). Social security benefits are quite generous but always based on previous employment records, and thus only eligible to those who occupy the core, secure, sectors of the labour market, and these are still to a much greater extent men than women. Taken together, this makes women´s position very vulnerable. The frequent use of the word *cotizar* among my informants was a concrete proof of this constant worry on part of the women. The word means, in this context, to pay premiums to social security, for example to have an employment that includes this possibility. It is not legal to employ a person without it, but it is very frequent and not seen as strange at all by most people. It has been estimated that about one third or one half of the labor market in Spain is in the grey zone between legal and illegal employment conditions, but the official figure of the black market, established by researchers is estimated to 20% (Schneider 2011). Women are clearly over-represented in temporal or informal forms of employment (Snyder 2005). In the light of this, it is not surprising that to be able to *cotizar* is seen as a privilege.

One reason for women´s vulnerability in relation to this dual system was that the unemployment security was the easiest way to prolong the paid time at home with children**.** Paid parental leave was four months, of which the first six weeks had to be used by the mother and the remaining ten could be used by either of the spouses. In reality almost all of it was maternity leave (Valiente 2005), giving employers a good reason not to employ – or to fire - mothers or mothers-to-be. Gloria was one of those women, whose cases were often reported in the papers; while on maternity leave with her first child, her (private) employer made her redundant. Knowing that there was legislation against this kind of discrimination, I asked if she had sued him, but she just laughed and said that there is no use in suing the employers (on discrimination grounds). Judging from what I read about similar cases, covered by the media, I concluded that she was probably right.

Alicia, who did work full time for many years before becoming a mother, was one of those women who could use the unemployment security as extra parental leave. Her

son Marcos was two years old when I got to know the family, and even though he spent parts of his days in a nursery school, Alicia got to spend a lot of time with him, compared to what would have been the case had she been engaged in work outside the home. It did not take long until she told me that she was pregnant, and from what I understood this was exactly what she had hoped – and planned – for, not least for economic reasons. When she got called in for a job interview, she said with a big smile "I will go there and be VERY pregnant". In this way she could be unemployed for another six months (the rest of her pregnancy), and then move on to her four months´ maternity leave.

Spanish working hours were, judging from many women´s stories, impossible, especially if you worked in the private sector. Most shops, dental clinics, etc, opened at 10, closed at 14, opened again at 17, and closed at 20 or 20.30. Alicia referred to the old siesta system as "a myth", not applicable to an urban, modern context, in which people (that is mostly women) during these free hours had to travel from work, pick up children from school, go home and make lunch, feed the kids and eat themselves, do other household chores, then accompany the children back to school and go back to their own work place. For this reason, most people dreamed of becoming a *funcionario/a*, employed by the state, which gave much more secure and regulated conditions and better working hours (most people who worked as *funcionarios* finished by 17 every day and did not work Saturdays). Gloria, who had done her *oposiciones*[29] was now on the seemingly never ending waiting list for a state employment. In her opinion, these employments should be reserved for women as long as they take on more responsibilities for children and house chores.

One strategy to lighten the burden of the difficult working hours, was "intensive working week", which in reality meant doing – and getting paid for – full time, with permission to tighten up the schedule and do the job in fewer hours. This strategy could naturally not be used by people working in shops or other parts of the service sector; rather it was a solution for office workers. There was also part time work, which was not very common. In most cases, it was not up to the individual to choose, but rather the employer´s right to decide how working hours were to be organized. To Rosana, the intensive week was the ideal. She did her full time in few(er) hours – which among other things meant that lunch equaled a sandwich by the computer – so that she could pick her children up from school every day and spend time with them in the late afternoon/early evening. MariCruz, on the

[29] To be eligible for a *funcionario*-stand, a state employment, one has to go through *oposiciones*, competitive tests. There are many private academies that offer courses to prepare for these tests. After having completed the tests one is entitled to apply for and stand in line for the state employments. The system is also to some extent used in the private sector

other hand, wished to work part-time (mornings, 8-14 hrs), and was lucky to have it sanctioned by her private employer, but she told me that she had not had a wage raise since then and was excluded from many interesting projects. When MariCruz´s sister-in-law, a trained architect, asked her for advice if to take or turn down a public job offer, doubting because of the job not being relevant for her training, MariCruz asked her rhetorically "do you want to have children?!", implying that working for a private employer is nearly impossible to combine with parenthood.

Lucinda said that she was lucky compared to many others – she performed interviews for a marketing company and could her-self decide *when* to do her job, which made it easy to adapt her schedule to her children´s school hours. When I asked about the form of her employment, she answered "permanent". To me permanent means a set, stable salary but it turned out that Lucinda got paid by how many interviews she managed to carry out. To many of the women I met this would be an ideal, "flexibility" or the right to work part-time, and this was asked for to a greater extent than collective child care for example.

Much research has shown that more flexibility in the labor market does not automatically equal better life conditions for women. As British sociologist and gender researcher Rosemary Crompton shows, this "numerical flexibility" has been marketed within the EU as *the* solution to "the impossible equation", but "...flexible employment, which is concentrated amongst women, is not usually associated with individual success in the labour market, and flexible workers often tend to be in lower level positions..." (Crompton 2006:7). Added to this is the sense of economic stress that comes with not knowing one´s income. That this so called flexible employment was asked for by my informants as a solution, was logical, since it accommodates a sense of agency, compatible with an individualist discourse, that places all responsibility on the individual women. Simultaneously, it allows for a continued emphasis on the family and the familial as key to *confianza* in the (re)construction of Spanish motherhood ideals.

This section has laid out the conditions of a social security system that discriminates against women, and that - in combination with working hours that have not been adapted to urban, "modern" society - is one of the reasons why women, particularly mothers, constantly have to engage in individual negotiating with employers, partners and other family members to make ends meet and time to stretch. Next, day-care is discussed, both the lack of a state financed form, but more importantly, how different strategies are framed within a discourse on *confianza*, which is still guaranteed by family.

2.2 Material Conditions of Being a Mother, Part of a Family II: Day-Care

Day-care in Spain is scarce and expensive. Between the ages four months and three years there is no societal arrangement, only private day-care-centers and pre-schools which for many is too expensive an option. From the age of three all children are entitled to starting school, but school hours are usually not the same as regular work hours and hence difficult to combine with full-time salaried work. The school day is divided into two parts, and those parents who cannot afford to pay for school lunch have to pick their children up, bring them home, feed them and bring them back for the afternoon session. School day often ends about the same time as most people enter work again after the *siesta*. As pointed out by Celia Valiente (2003), the education rationale underlying the Spanish child care system, may have positive effects in terms of children´s learning, but does not facilitate (women´s) conciliation of family and working life.

Luísa, 34, does not yet have any children, but does see it as part of her future. When I ask her about how she would like to organise her life with a child, she expands on the subject:

> "…but naturally, the problem is up until three years of age, what do you do with your children, where can you leave them, I don´t know if I would leave them with my mother-in-law, with Pedro´s mother.../...I don't know if I would stop working because..../...I really don´t know, I would have to talk with her, because naturally, she is now an elderly woman.../...I don´t know if she could manage such a great responsibility, I don´t know if she would have enough energy to be with a baby and take care of it and...or I would have to find a person who would take care of it for me so that I could work, another person, younger.../...I don´t know if I would stop working and dedicate my time, for example for three years...to dedicate my whole time to my child, the first three years.../...that is what I would most of all like to do..."...maybe I would say, ok, I leave it with my mother-in-law, because she is a person that I trust, have confidence in, that I know, because of course, to leave it with a person that you don´t know so well, or leave it to a day care centre where you don´t know the persons either, well maybe it is a little bit more difficult..../...I think that he [Pedro] would prefer that I would stay at home..../...but I don´t think that leaving it with my mother-in-law would be a problem either..."[30]

This quotation contains many interesting parts, and it well represents the fact that how to organize family life with children is not a given in Spanish contemporary society, it is rather something that is subject to constant internal and external negotiations, not only among parents but also among parents-to-be, grandparents and others. It is something that is

[30] Luísa´s mother is not an alternative here. She is already deeply involved in the care arrangements around Luísa´s sister´s child, and Luísa and her husband – if and when they have children – will not be living in Benituria, but in Pedro´s home town.

negotiated, talked about, thought about and planned, but that usually, in the end, ends up in ad hoc solutions of all different kinds.

I have chosen to talk about strategies in this context – for lack of a concept that better captures the gendered practices of dealing with the strenuous combination of motherhood and wage labor. However, as argued by Tobío, the concept implies rationality in a way that cannot fully capture all different and contradicting feelings, that lead to diverse approaches, as was illustrated with the quote above. Tobío describes it as biased in that many of its meanings are based on masculinist understandings and do not well describe the "...*processes and ways of being* [which] explain much of women´s practices.../...it could probably be said that it is one of one of the main elements of [Bourdieus´s] feminine habitus..." (Tobío 2001:343). The quote from Luísa above so well captures that how to solve the child care issue cannot be discussed in isolation, it is one of Spanish women´s basic dilemmas and as such tightly intertwined with different gendered identities and relations, as mother, as wife, as daughter-in-law, with "ways of being". This resonates with the idea that "...family responsibilities do not operate on the basis of fixed rules, enshrined as ´rights´ or ´obligations´. Rather they are developed and created over time, interweaving material and moral dimensions. In developing family responsibilities, people also develop their own identities..." (Crompton 2006:12-13). Here Crompton does not distinguish between the genders. From my female informants´ perspective this is not correct. In their view it is they who develop this integrated way of living a life, whereas their male partners do not (with exceptions), another basic dilemma.

Many of my informants had, or had during periods, opted for the solution that Luísa was having doubts about, the involvement of relatives in child care, especially mothers and fathers. Mothers- and fathers- in law were also used but as pointed out by Tobío (2001:349), the major part of the help of the older generation is received through feminine lineage. Luísa´s doubts and problematizing were definitely shared by many others, but in no case my pre-judgment about what should be the problem was verified. Given the – in so many ways - different norms (cultural, religious) that had dominated Spanish society during the last two generations, I had expected a certain worry among the women, that mothers and mothers-in-law would indoctrinate their grandchildren with the wrong values. But this was not confirmed by my material, rather the opposite. Beatríz, for example, one of the most outspoken atheists among my informants, expressed the greatest *trust* in her deeply religious mother-in-law as baby-sitter, and Luísa, in her reasoning with herself (quotation above), also spoke of the importance of *confianza*. The younger women´s concerns were more about the

well-being of the older women (and men), and they tried hard not to over-use them, so that they would not be worn out and not have the energy and time to take care of themselves. This worry could, however, implicitly also say something about a fear that their children would not be stimulated enough. Luísa´s words, for example, "I don´t know if she would have enough energy", can be interpreted as carrying a double meaning; a worry that the mother-in-law will wear herself out *and* a worry that the child will not be taken care of properly or receive enough stimulation. In the end, one must not forget that for many women, their own parents are still the only option, the only way to solve the impossible equation, and it may be difficult to explicitly express distrust in those on whom you depend completely.

Virginia, who had one son, said that she would have loved to have another baby, but did not want to ask of her mother to once again take care of her child. This was one of many examples of a transition phase, when not only motherhood but the whole concept of family was being renegotiated, and consequently caused great insecurity. Whereas the meaning of family in Spain had had a clear aim of supporting each other, the new individualist attitude included that a family consisted of individuals, who each and everyone, regardless of age or gender should be entitled to moving from an *ethic of service* to an *ethic of choice*[31]. To Virginia, leaving the baby to a day care centre or to a baby-sitter at an early age was not an option, thus she had no choice but to be content with one child. Many women expressed these kinds of doubts when it came to leaving their (specifically small) children with strangers, be it a baby-sitter or a nursery school/day-care centre. Rosana, whose mother took care of her first child, had to find a baby-sitter for her second, "...for Estrella I did find a woman who came every day and that is indeed tough.../...to leave a baby of four months to a lady that you don´t know.../...many days I left for work crying...".

On the other hand, there were also women who did have the greatest confidence in their baby-sitters and nursery schools and did not find this solution problematic. Alicia and her husband opted for a day-care centre, when Alicia was to go back to work, partly because Alicia´s mother was not yet retired, and because the mother-in-law had not shown an interest in helping out (something that hurt Alicia a lot). However, Marcos was not a baby, but one year old when he started attending the day-care centre. Susana and her husband contracted a babysitter for their daughter when she was two months old, and Susana, to whom her professional life was essential for being a good parent, was very satisfied with the arrangement.

[31] Terms used by Heather Paxson (2004) on her material on Greece.

So, all in all, there was extensive variation in how women looked upon and argued around the subject of child care. Even though personal relations were still very much seen as the guarantor of safe and good care, I argue that professionalism was increasingly sought out. Spanish society was going through a transfer phase; *confianza*, which could earlier only be obtained in personal (family) relations, was gaining ground also in situations where people had to turn to professionals. Instead of saying that *confianza* was slowly getting replaced by "professionalism", I argue that professionalism increasingly equaled *confianza*. Alicia well illustrated this transfer phase, in which *doxic* [32] perceptions of family as the only expert on its own caring processes, the only actor to be trusted, was giving way to insecurity and cultural negotiations around family ties versus professionalism. She spoke often and highly of her mother, who was the obvious choice when she needed a baby-sitter occasionally. But small comments on details in her mother´s ways with her son, made it obvious that the trust she sometimes expressed to have in her mother, was not all watertight and complete. Also, the fact that she would like to see more of training on different matters regarding child care, and that she was very content with the nursery school that Marcos attended, indicated that she did have trust (*confianza*) in professionals.[33]

Specialization comes to my mind. Whereas "before" motherhood was seen to be inherent in women, today the knowledge of how to treat and take care of a baby, was increasingly becoming a skill that had to be learned by way of training. What was self-evident to the grand-mother may be subject to doubt and need for a professional´s opinion, to the mother/my informant. It also seemed that the "semi-professional" was not as easy to trust. Rosana, above, who paid "una señora" to look after her baby, left for work crying. It may be that in a transition period, professionalism has to be complete and solid, to come close to the cultural weight that is accorded to family members in search for *confianza*.

In the next section, focus is placed on male partners´ attitudes and role in the family, through the eyes of my female informants.

2.3 Collaborating partner or a helping hand?

To Alicia, who defined herself as *ama de casa*[34], the opportunity to get out of the house that an employment can provide was invaluable. Any kind of work would do, as long as it

[32] In the Bourdieuan sense.
[33] The complexity of the Spanish concept *confianza* – including its gendered nature – is expanded on by Thurén (1988).
[34] *Ama de casa* means literally housewife, but has a wider connotation than "just" responsibility for the completion of household chores.

combined easily with active motherhood. However, it soon became clear that her husband had never favored her working outside the home. In the following passage Alicia relates what happened when she tried to go back to work after her first child had turned one:

> "...and I waited for Marcus to turn one, before I went back to working life but it lasted only a week, because I saw that it was impossible...///...working life with family...of course...I could have sacrificed myself a bit to try to make it work...///...but I did not feel that I had the support that I needed because...///...He [the husband] did nothing but call me at the clinic...///...as soon as he saw that the time was 8.30 [pm] and I had not come home yet, he was calling me to the clinic.....".

Alicia was not the only informant whose husband did not fully support her decision to work outside the home. A few had opposed it explicitly while others had "offered" their wives to stay home. In Alicia and her husband´s case, the conflict between them on whether or not Alicia should go back to her work at the clinic was clearly based in resistance on part of the husband to deal with care- or domestic work. According to Tobío (2001), "…there is a contradiction between egalitarian attitudes and strong differences in actual behavior…" and much research has shown that Spanish men living in partnerships rank the lowest among European male partners regarding participation in domestic and care work (ibid:357). In my material I found few indications that matters were changing dramatically. In the following, I will show how this was manifested, but also challenged, by women, in the discourses around the concepts help and collaboration

I got very varied stories about how housework and child care were shared or not shared in my informants´ families. Quite a few women expressed frustration and it was often a topic when women got together. A few women seemed to perceive housework as equally shared with no complaints about the husband´s contributions. MariCruz was one of these women, she and Lorenzo shared equally "to the extent that is possible" both housework chores and the care for their daughter Eva, and among MariCruz´ group of female friends this fact and especially her collaborating husband were often referred to and talked about. Others did complain but also stated that they preferred not to argue, since arguments take a lot of time and energy and therefore it is better to let be. MariCruz saw this as part of the problem, saying that she often got the comment that she was lucky to have found such a good and collaborating man as Lorenzo, a comment that irritated her deeply, "…excuse me, but I have also fought for this…". She explained to me, that her husband had been very spoiled by his mother and had not known anything about how to run a household when they had moved in

together, and that he had learned, simply because she would not accept an unequal way with things. She says about her friends that they had failed to do exactly that, to set the standards from the beginning:

> "… because this has happened to friends of mine and then they come to me complaining and I tell them that they shouldn´t complain to me, but instead they should talk to him, then they say that he doesn´t listen, then I say they should keep trying…."

It is obvious that MariCruz thinks that *el machismo* is as much, or more, a result of women´s attitudes than of men´s, that women´s complaining (preferably outside the home) does nothing to change things as long as it is not translated into real demands and negotiations at home. MariCruz here articulates an individualist attitude to unequal gender relations (individual women are to blame if things do not improve), the commonality of which is confirmed in research showing that Spanish women put much more verbal and practical effort into trying to "educate" their male partners into more collaboration or help, than they do in demands towards the state (Tobío 2001:347).

A couple of my informants always used the word *colaborar* when referring to their partners´ share of household and care work, but most used the word so heavily disliked by MariCruz, *ayudar* (help). One example comes from an interview with Elisa:

> "...he helps me, if I do the cleaning part, he does the whole grocery shopping part, the supermarket on Saturdays, he likes that more..../////...so, I, ok....so, we divide the work, he does the shopping, he goes here and there, we look at what we will be needing in the following week and we make the list, and he goes, and when he comes back, well, he helps me with what there is left of the cleaning, the bathrooms or whatever, well, he helps me...////....he makes more dinners and I make more of the meals that take preparations, rice dishes...you know, he does not know so much..."

This quotation is a brilliant example of this help-discourse, but it contains other interesting parts as well. The verb *gustar* (like) as well as the verb *saber* (know) are both used here to explain why the partner does certain things, and in my interpretation this is part of the individualist discourse that is used so extensively. By way of speaking about individual tastes and likings, one can describe practices as gendered, without analysing them as such.

Gender was sometimes used explicitly, in explaining how differently men and women (generally) approach matters. Soledad says:

> "...he has a series of priorities and I have others...you know...with the home, with the children, with the time...we are different...but I think that it is simply a condition of...of sex...I think....it is not that he is worse, or I am better, simply that, because we are conditioned as man and woman he has one way of prioritizing, different from mine..../////...maybe it is because I in my childhood had to take on a lot of responsibility, you know, maybe I have ...exaggerated...."

If "a condition" to Soledad has biological connotations or not is difficult to detect. She oscillated between biology, in the sense of something inborn/static/non-changeable and other more dynamic and fluid models of explanation. This was typical of the middle class she identified with. The oscillating between positions showed an awareness of a "modern" attitude to gender as a social construction, that could nonetheless easily co-exist with what in the beginning of the 1980´s would have been considered conservative and back-striving, in the eyes of "progressive" people of the time. Soledad appears a very (self)-reflecting person, an ability which Anthony Giddens identifies as one of the key features of modernity, or rather high modernity, "…the reflexive project of the self, which consists in the sustaining of coherent, yet continuously *revised*, biographical narratives, takes place in the context of multiple choice…" (Giddens 1991:5). This continuing revising of biographical narratives, are however based on an authentic self, perceived as existing a priori, and choices are to be based on that self. Giddens writes: "…the moral thread of self-actualisation is one of authenticity, based on ´being true to oneself´…" (ibid:78). Soledad claims that a big difference between today´s generation and that of her mother´s is that people are more "authentic", more faithful to their "true" selves, and thereby happier, more able to live a life in "enjoyment". The notions of desire, authenticity, (individual) choice are most clearly used and developed in my middle class cluster, whereas I did not find it as much among other informants, who I categorize as working class in terms of life styles and habits. This is in line with Beverly Skeggs´ pinning down the (individual) choice based on (individual) desire as classed and reflexivity (the ability to make choices based on a good knowledge of oneself) as a privileged position (Skeggs 2000:171).

In general, (bad) education was often referred to as a justifying reason for male partners´ non-collaboration; mothers-in-law were held responsible for having spoilt their sons and made them insensitive to domestic matters, but the analysis seldom went beyond this. In group situations, women´s talk of men in general and implicitly of their partners, was jargon like, there were jokes and ridiculing, whereas in the interview situation I perceived that many women tried to balance the image they were painting of their male partners; they tried to

account for their partners´ shortcomings and also questioned themselves. Gloria speaks about her partner in these terms:

> "...you know, he is a very good person, but since he was raised in that way, it is....it is not that he does not want to...///…. [and about feminism and not being a feminist] ...they [the men] obviously have other virtues...///...we are not superior.... [About herself, after having talked a lot about the problem of not sharing equally] …it is beautiful too to care for your family...///...perhaps I am very demanding...my girlfriends tell me that since I am very sensible because of my father, sometimes I attack him [the husband] because of that...".

So, both Soledad (in the quotation above), and here Gloria, open up to the possibility that it can also be they who have exaggerated demands. They have grown up with fathers who were both abusive and non-collaborating, they had to take on great responsibilities early in life, and they obviously think that this has somehow influenced their ways with their partners. Vicenta, who grew up without a father, and who has experienced bad and abusive relationships, said to be so happy to have found a partner who was "a sun" that she would never worry about his shortcomings in the household.

In a group discussion organized by me, with the group consisting of four mothers in their early forties, who were all rather highly educated, the subject of male domestic incompetence brought on a heated discussion. To two of the women, the blind spot of men when it comes to see what needs to be done, and how to do it, was a very dominating theme, and the claims of the other two, that their husbands did their equal share in the household, caused surprise, "but *where* did you find him?" and similar mocking remarks were uttered. Esperanza exemplified with her husband doing the cooking, concentrating on only that, without having his mind set on all other matters that also have to be sorted out in a home. He demanded from the rest of the family to leave him in peace and not interfere with his domestic chores. Esperanza attributed this to his and other men´s self-esteem, taking for granted, that whatever activity they are engaged in, it deserves to be respected from the environment. She seemed to think that this was something women can learn from men, to try to raise their self-esteem, which will help them to be less "on top of everything" and more focused on one task at a time. She also says that this need for female control, to be on top of things, may inhibit men from doing their share of domestic and care work.

A few days after this get-together, I coincidentally ran into Esperanza and her friend MariSol who invited me to have coffee with them in a bar. Esperanza eagerly brought up the group discussion, rather upset with the other two women´s, in her view, ridiculing

attitudes towards men. "...what difference does it make if he tightens the child´s shoe laces the wrong way the first few times he does it?", she asked rhetorically, "... to learn takes practice...you have to give men a chance...".

The discourse on being on top of things appeared so frequently that it called for an expansion on the topic. This is done in the next section, and here also related to the signs of specialization that were frequent.

2.4 Being on Top of the Specialists

Susana, one of the participants who irritated Esperanza so deeply in the group discussion, in an interview with me makes the following comment about all the work that remains to be done when her cleaning lady has done her hours:

> "...and then for example, the rest…which is not only about cleaning the house, because this day from seven to eight I was taking care of things here at home, so…regardless of these girls [the house-keeping help] there are many things to do….///….and my husband helps me, he has his part, which is emptying the dishwasher, take care of the kitchen, emptying the washing machine, and…well…he makes the beds…but my husband does not vacuum clean, he does not iron, I iron for him, I don´t normally iron because Yoana [one of the house-keepers] does the ironing, but this morning before taking my daughter to school, I had to iron a shirt and some pants, because they had not been ironed, so I iron….you know….there are 50 000 things…///…no, I don´t argue….I don´t argue because I am…let´s say…I am always on top of…you know, I am always in control…"

What Susana expresses here, "to be on top of things", I saw acted out in practice many times. The expression was used by many, sometimes explicitly, like in this case, other times implicitly, like in Elisa´s case when I comment on her home being impeccably clean and in order in spite of the family not having help from outside,

> "...yes, and you know why, this too, I don´t like to leave it either, I don´t like that things are building up, I prefer to do a little every day, at night I always, you know, fix and arrange, then maybe I go over the place with the vacuum cleaner...///...I am very organized...".

This constant fixing (my word) does not seem to have negative connotations to Elisa, it appears as if it were done automatically, without effort, and the way she describes it makes me think that this way of relating to household chores, rather reduces her stress level. Other

women talked about *la faena*[35] in a more negative sense; it was obvious that being on top of things did influence women´s (perception of) stress, but remained an ideal, a norm.

The "be on top of things"-discourse in my interpretation corresponds to *taking care of*, one of four phases of caring identified by Joan Tronto (1994) which serve to see caring as a gendered process. Tronto has identified analytically separate but interconnected phases of caring, "caring about" which implies recognition, "taking care of" – assuming responsibility – "care-giving" which refers to the direct response to needs and finally "care-receiving". Usually, taking care of, is associated with public roles and masculinity, but in the examples above, it is clearly the women who take care of, "run" the household.[36] In the realm of the family, it was mostly women who practiced care on three of these "levels", just care receiving seemed reserved for males. The only occasion when women said they received care in the family was when their mothers came to help them out in the home. Lucinda, for example, looked very happy and content when telling about the summers in the family´s beach house – reading and sleeping in a sun chair while her mother did all the domestic work.[37]

One strategy used in the struggle to get the life together was to bring in house-keeping help from outside. The forms varied a lot, from Virginia who paid her mother´s friend for a couple of hours cleaning per week to Rosana and her husband whose house-keeper came in four days a week and took care of basically everything. There was consensus among the women on the positive effects of help from outside and the only reason given for not having it was economic in character. MariSol expressed doubts, which I interpreted as part of her egalitarian attitude to life, but concluded that with such a big house and with her husband being asthmatic, they really had no choice. She clearly had chosen the minimalist solution, someone who came to clean once a week, without much of interaction with the family. MariSol´s neighbor Rosana was an example of the other end of the spectrum. She was one of those informants who did not complain about her husband´s share of the household chores, she said that he did more than she did, yet she considered it necessary with help from outside "for a pleasant family coexistence". The first time I visited Rosana, her Polish house-keeper opened the door and told me that "the Mrs is resting". After that, I met her on every

[35] *La faena* means the chores, literally, and is a common everyday way to refer to household work. But it can refer to any kind of job. In colloquial language it can also mean a setback or an irritation.
[36] For an in-depth discussion of the concept of care, see my paper Womanhood Renegotiated – Consuming Care in Urban Spain (Ekström 2009).
[37] In a chapter in my forthcoming dissertation, I discuss whether grooming practices in salons, by professionals, can be related to/interpreted as compensation for this lack of care receiving in relation to partners (Ekström forthcoming).

occasion I was in the house; she was cleaning, ironing, arguing with the children or asking Rosana for advice. There was a familial tone of voice used between them, and she felt almost part of the family. Eileen Drew´s (1998:28-30) distinction between "caring about" (implies affection) and "caring for" (does not per se imply emotions), is applicable here. Whereas MariSol is asking for someone who "cares for" (or "takes care of", to use Tronto´s distinction) the cleaning of the house, Rosana obviously prefers someone who "cares about", who is emotionally involved.

To further illustrate the different attitudes towards domestic help, I will briefly bring up the perspective of a domestic worker, Sagrario, a "multi-worker", who took pride in her cleaning work. She found it very intimate to clean somebody´s home, and therefore she could not clean any house or apartment. She had to feel respect for the person living there, she had to be emotionally involved, to care about (Tronto 1994). Among other people she had cleaned at Magdalena´s, one of her best friends.

How can this phenomenon be analyzed? Do cleaning and housekeeping have a value? And is that a residue of old Spain´s *ama de casa*-system? I perceive not only a quantitative, but also a qualitative difference in the ways people organize their house keeping help. Having an acquaintance or a friend "doing a few hours" and sometimes doing the cleaning with that person is something else than employing a stranger who many times is also a stranger from less affluent parts of the world. The last mentioned solution is increasing, logically because Spanish women have less and less time. Related to the change, I find it relevant to ask: is house-keeping losing its cultural value and receiving an economic? A neo liberal economy does favour specialization, and this may well be one of the areas where specialization is gaining ground.

As described above, alongside this trend of specialization, it was very common that women say that they have to "be on top of everything", which means that they have to control and supervise everything, at least in the area of the home and child care activities. Many had domestic help, but the supervising function was nevertheless placed on the woman, never on her male partner. In my interpretation demands on specialization, in child care, etc, combined with expectations (from oneself/from the family/society) to take an overall responsibility, lay the ground for the sense of stress and insecurity that almost all my informants expressed. Therefore, an analysis of the concept of housewife is needed here. How domestic activity, specialized or not, full time or not, is valued by one-self and by the surrounding society will be the topic of the following section.

2.5 The Dubious Value of Housewifery

First let me shortly mention the particular position the Housewife upheld in Franco´s Spain. With the end of the civil war (1939) and the formation of a dictatorship, the republican politics which had included a radical stand on gender equality, came to an abrupt end. The Franco regime had a very clear goal to exclude women from certain spheres and activities, and this was expressed in the Work Act as follows: "The State will forbid women´s night work, regulate home working and liberate the married woman of the factory (Ortiz Heras 2006:3).[38] [39]

During Thurén´s research in Benituria in the early 1980´s, the housewife had a non-contested value, there was no other way to run a household for a whole family with children (there were no supermarkets and no take-away food, washing machines and other facilities were just becoming common). To have children was considered of greatest importance and even though birth rate figures had started to decline, it was not comparable to what was to come[40]. Thus, even though women at this time had begun entering the labor market (and, as said before, a progressive person had to embrace at least the idea of female work), most went back to housewifery when the children started to arrive.

[38] The law was implemented in 1938. Its Spanish name was *Fuero del Trabajo* and it stated: "*El Estado prohibirá el trabajo nocturno de las mujeres, regulará el trabajo a domicilio y libertará a la mujer casada del taller y de la fábrica*".
[39] For a more extended discussion on the housewife during Franco, see Section 3.1.
[40] For birth rates by year, see the web-page of *Instituto Nacional de Estadística* http://www.ine.es/jaxi/menu.do?type=pcaxis&path=%2Ft20%2Fe304&file=inebase&L=0.

In my first conversation with my first potential informant, in which we talked about whether and to what extent she would be able to participate in my study, she said to me "…since I have no responsibilities now…it will be no problem…". I understood of course, that she was referring to her not being tied up in paid work at the time being, which she also pointed out when I confronted her at the end of my field work with her initial remarks (of which she herself was unaware), but such an utterance says something about how different kinds of work are valued and I think this is inextricably linked to experiences/perceptions of stress among women. I contrast Alicia´s statement with Gloria:

> Karin: What do you do right now?
> Gloria: I work but I don´t get paid…
> Karin: "…so how would you define yourself…?"
> Gloria (in an ironic tone of voice): "…I´m the perfect housewife…"

As opposed to Alicia, she indicates that it is work she does but that she is also aware of it not being highly valued by society. Later on in the interview she says: "…I care for my children, I care for my husband…", "…but it is also a beautiful thing to care for…I do it because I am happy with it…". Here, she withdraws her earlier quite harsh tone of voice and emphasizes her own choice, following her inner wish/desire. This was a general feature in my material. On one level women expressed strong awareness of structural inequalities, but in everyday discourse and practices, it was the individualist discourse – own choice/desire, responsibility – that everything revolved around. In my interpretation, this was an articulation of the phase Spain was going through during my time of research, where women were expected to *choose* to work, while the way society was organized signaled something different; the need for the unpaid, invisible housewife, a paradox that in it-self could cause (perceptions of) stress, and a nearly schizophrenic experience: what does it mean to be a woman, a mother? How am I to act to be of value? Gloria´s quote above also points to what Paxson concludes about Greek society:

> "…as the traditional family group gave way to the sum of individuals we now call a family, the mother lost her traditional position as manager of the most sacred of institutions to become an attendant to the needs of each separate member of her family…" (2004:7)

Neither Alicia nor Gloria was a housewife in the old meaning of the word. Even though referring to themselves as such, they did not think of it as a permanent state. They both

wished to return to the labor market, and while at home they both made use of the unemployment security, so they were not completely without an income. Among my informants, the old model of housewife was rejected, and their expressing a desire to work for an income, to be economically autonomous and to receive an identity in that capacity was clearly feminist, although, not necessarily, or even commonly, labeled as such, which is consistent with Tobío´s research on Spanish women (2001:343).

I got to hear comments on women who had chosen to stay at home full-time. When I had interviewed Susana in her home, I asked her if she knew any "real" housewives. She answered that there were a couple of women in her building who did not work outside the home, but she did not really know them or socialize with them. She lowered her voice a bit and said that she found it quite odd that they were willing to live off their husbands´ incomes. Josepa, a teacher, when we talked about the cost of school meals, that house-wives mostly bring their children home for lunch to "justify" that they do not work outside the home.

But the clearest example of how full-time housewifery was rejected, I got on an informal visit to MariSol´s home. I once again brought up my concerns about my research being too one-sided, that I only seemed to get acquainted with rather "progressive", "modern" women, and that for the sake of balancing my investigation it would be nice to get to interview a couple of women who define themselves as conservatives. MariSol thought for a while, then suddenly got up and said "let´s grab the bull by its horns", and told me to come with her to call on a neighbor´s house. So we did. MariSol and I together took care to explain what my research was about, but when the woman realized that the interview was not about filling in a yes or a no, she kindly rejected my request, referring to lack of time. When I and MariSol walked back through the streets, I said to her, that women´s lack of time so far had been my greatest difficulty to overcome. MariSol replied "…this is not a case of lack of time, this woman does nothing but attend to her husband, as do her mother and her daughter; they form a true matriarchy…". Back at the house, a couple of neighboring women came by to sit and chat for a while on MariSol´s doorstep. She told them the story, and added in a lower voice, giggling a little, that what this woman probably feared was that I would ask her how many times a week she got laid, and similar questions. Obviously, the connotations of housewifery were many-fold - among others that sexuality was a taboo subject - but clearly negative. On the other hand, some women referred to friends who had chosen housewifery and in these contexts they took care not to judge but instead they emphasized the impossibility of themselves making the same choice. Some women had also been "offered" by their husbands (with high incomes) to stay at home but declined.

The above examples show that there were constant negotiations around what was considered proper (amount of time) when it came to time spent at work versus time spent at home/with children, family. Obviously, there existed an image of a balance, but exactly where and how and when that balance was reached remained negotiable. The individualist discourse also stipulates that every woman should act according to her heart, thus the outspoken negative attitude that MariSol expressed in the above example is not very representative. Critiques of other people´s choices were usually uttered more subtly. This will be further elaborated on in the next chapter.

The perception of the time concept lies at the core of how (in)equality in domestic and care work versus free time is articulated, produced, reproduced and changed. Therefore the last section of this chapter will be dedicated to a theoretical discussion on this concept, related to the equally important concept of space/place, illustrated with empirical examples.

2.6 Whose Time and Whose Place/Space?

The work-care-leisure balance in contemporary, Western society has been much researched. Time is the issue and the dominant type of research used to investigate it is time-use-research. It is quantitative and built on a separation of time in distinguishable categories, the most common being paid work, non-paid work, self-care and leisure. In the category of self-care or "personal time" (Bittman & Wajcman 2000:167), is included everything from sleeping to grooming and receiving medical treatment. My informant Vicenta dedicates her one free afternoon per week (that is free in the sense that she is not at work nor in her home, nor with her children), to visiting a weight-loss clinic. This is but one obvious example of how blurred the boundaries can be between well-established research categories. What Vicenta does in the clinic is clearly some sort of self-care, but she is very clear that it is leisure time that she can do with what she wants, and thus chooses to spend it on her body, to enhance her bodily perfection. In what category does this fit in?

Bearing this example in mind, it is easy to see that the main method of classical time use research - counting the hours dedicated to these different categories – is a risky venture. Bittman et al have found, based on surveys from 10 OECD-countries that the more "flexible" the economy and people´s lives are, the less such purely quantitative surveys say about the gendered nature of time. Without asking people how these activities are perceived, experienced and valued, both from one´s own perspective but also from the surrounding society, the figures in themselves say little, and can easily be wrongly interpreted. One such

obvious flaw is the assumption that increased leisure time in Western society, has, by much research, been depicted as equivalent to increased gender equality. This has been contested by feminist research, emphasizing the need to look at the distribution of leisure time (Fraser, 1997, and others). As stated at the outset of this chapter, cultural contextualization is what is needed here, the anthropological contribution.

For obvious reasons the subjects in research focused on the work-care-leisure balance are, to a great extent, heterosexual couples in nuclear family arrangements. The so called "double burden" or "double shift" that women´s entry into the paid labor force has caused them, referring to the fact that expectations on bread-winning has been added to the domestic responsibilities, which have not decreased to the same degree, has received immense attention. Simultaneously, there is "...a standard assumption of current sociology.../...that modern Western personal relationships are based on the central value of egalitarianism..." (Bittman & Wajcman 2004). This is not least taken to be true for heterosexual partner relationships. The common view is that Western societies move forward, progress linearly, and that this includes a move towards gender equality. Even though the Nordic countries still keep their (imagined) leading position, "the West" as a whole and its liberal base is seen as the guarantor of "women´s rights" and equal value (nb relative to men).

As pointed out by Bittman and others, there is a clear tension between these two lines of research. On the one hand, relationships (are said to) become more (gender) equal, on the other hand women increasingly experience the weight of the double burden. Research also shows that the total amount of leisure time has increased, but women express perceptions of time scarcity and stress.

The problem of "the double burden" is defined differently, depending on theoretical (and political) point of departure. A conservative interpretation problematizes the (presumed) dissolution of specialization based on "natural" gender roles. In my field this was reflected among more conservative people. There was an open discourse, exemplified by "the orange man" in the vignette of this text, that women had become egoistic and placed their own self-realization before marriage and motherhood. I would like to point out that there are traces of this discourse, though much more subtle, also among my self-defined "modern" informants. Soledad, who on the one hand says that work is very important for her (women´s) self-esteem and independence, also says "...I interpret motherhood as something that perhaps other mothers...well, they are incapable of...putting their work in second place...".

Another line of research, following Esping-Andersen (Crompton 2006), is focused on (the lack) of state financed welfare, which can relieve women of their double burden.

Feminist research, finally, (although also partly taking into account the lack of welfare institutions), focuses on the unequal domestic work burden, the fact that (heterosexual) spouses, contrary to much sociological claims, live in highly unequal and hierarchical relationships, where work loads are far from equally shared. Nancy Fraser, feminist and philosopher, has among other factors, singled out the distribution of leisure time as key to understanding why what on the surface appears equal can be highly unequal (Fraser 1997). I get many examples of this during field work, the blurring of the fine line between (domestic and care) work and free time. One day I have invited Gloria for a drink. We run into each other in the afternoon and I take the opportunity to confirm our plans:

> Karin: are we still on for this evening then?
> Gloria: yes, you bet. Jorge asked if we could not go all of us, the whole family, but I said no, this is my afternoon, and just me and Karin who will meet for a beer and a gossip.

Later, in my balcony:

> Gloria: I promised Jorge to keep my mobile on. He will have to pick up the kids from school and is so nervous about it...Ah, there he is...and the kids...walking with....is it Lorenzo, Isabel´s husband? (...she has spotted two men and three kids on the street...)
> Karin: no, I don´t think so, it looks like someone else.

In that moment, Gloria´s mobile phone rings. It is Susana asking if Gloria has seen her husband. Then Gloria and I realize that it was not Isabel´s but Susana´s husband, Carlos, we saw with Jorge. This incident illustrates the fact that free time is not free for most women. Gloria has negotiated with her husband about her afternoon off. He has wished that they all go visit me but she has emphasized that it is her time and that this time will be transformed into something else, should she be accompanied by her family. However, she agrees on a compromise; to be available by phone. Susana, on the other hand, probably has not been asked by her husband to keep her phone on, but chooses to stay in control by calling a friend to ask about her husband´s whereabouts with their daughter. These examples may seem trivial but on the contrary they illustrate the constant negotiations that take place between men and women, among women, about the gendered work that has to be carried out on a day-to-day

basis, and it shows the complexity of such an established concept as leisure (time). The breaking down of the category leisure done in some time-use research, talking about adult leisure, interrupted leisure, etc (Bittman & Wajcman 2004), is one step in the right direction towards a finer tool that better can capture the gendered nature of leisure (time).

Related to time, and how one perceives of time, is space or place. Thus, equally problematic as the categorization of time use is the public-private dichotomy:

> "…feminist theorists have argued that the household performs a contradictory role in social reproduction under market capitalism. It is responsible for preparing individuals to be sent out into the social world ready to succeed in the market, but it can provide a physical site for this precisely because it is kept somewhat sequestered from the outside world…`out there´ in society …///…people are pitted against each other in an agonistic economy where their loyalties are demanded by institutional forms of power; confounded and wounded, they return to the household, which is run and symbolized by women and envisioned as a haven of safety and nurture…///…this dialectical relationship is exploited…///…under industrial capitalist, which wedge deeper the division between public (work) and private (leisure) domains…" (Paxton 2004:75).

This quotation does not deconstruct the public-private dichotomy per se, but rather points to the particular way that the domestic is exploited in relation to the public in this particular time in history. In my work I use Spanish sociologist Soledad Murillo´s *deconstruction* of the private sphere, in which she distinguishes between private and intimate (Murillo 2000), to escape the assumption that the domestic/private sphere implies tranquility, rest and protection (Sciama 1981). When I interviewed Soledad in her home the arrival of her husband made her tense and changed her ways with me considerably. When we were alone and he called on the phone, she picked up and looked at the display, whispering to me "it is him". This type of scene was repeated with many informants, in many homes, which strengthens Murillo´s argument, that the home is gendered but the way it is gendered varies with time, company, tasks performed, etc.

Furthermore, I find it vital to take one step further and point to the need to deconstruct "the public". In early feminist theorizing, the public sphere was made a water proof sphere, in which lies the answer to women´s empowerment, liberation and better lives. But also "the public", be it in terms of work place, a bar, a political meeting, or the street, brings different connotations and resonates with my informants´ perceptions of themselves as gendered beings in an infinite many different ways. The way one feels about – and acts on - a

place differs, according to with whom one is (if anybody), what time of the day, in what activity one is involved, etc. And, thus, also time (and/or lack thereof) is perceived accordingly.

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I have given a glimpse of the stressful situation many (most) women in my field perceived and transmitted that they lived in. I have outlined the material conditions, which, in Spanish society, are in many ways not very satisfying. I have looked into how male partners´ attitudes inform matters, given an account of the changing value of housewifery and integrated descriptions and analyses of the strategies that women use to cope with the straining situation. The next chapter will treat the raison d´etre for all that has been brought up so far: the so wished for and so ambivalent state of motherhood.

3 Becoming and Being a Proper Mother

Quite early in the period of research I got to know Beatríz, 40 years old, mother of two boys, and married to Paco, who had been her life partner for more than two decades. Much later I met Susana, also in her early forties, mother of a five-year-old daughter, married to Carlos since 17 years. Both these women had started their own business. They were smart, intellectual and charismatic. They both gave highest priority to the care and well-being of their children and becoming a mother was a vital step in their respective lives. I also perceived them as rather secure in their mothering roles; they expressed much less of insecurities and uncertainties on how to perform their motherhood than did my other informants, and – logically - they were less stressed. Setting these *similar* traits aside, they represented the opposite extremes of the very varied ideas and ideals of motherhood that I found in Benituria. Susana called pregnancy "a myth", and had not let motherhood stop her from running her business, while Beatríz had let go of her business for her children´s sake and dedicated much of her time to fighting for women´s right to natural (vaginal) birth giving and breast feeding in the organization *SINA*[41]. The reason for letting Beatríz and Susana introduce this chapter is that the opposite poles on the continuum of motherhood ideologies and practices say something about the uncertainties and insecurities expressed and played out in other positions on the continuum. Their positionings on various topics were what others – implicitly and unconsciously – had to relate to when struggling to construct and uphold the identity as mother.

Despite the uncertainties on *how* motherhood – from conception to choosing the children´s school - should be realized and carried out, studies indicate, as did my material, that Spanish women *do* want to have children in their lives. Birth rate statistics speak another language, showing that birth rates are steadily going down and that the number of women who do not become mothers at all is increasing. In her book "Twenty years of equality politics", a discussion on gender equality policies as an important part of the social democratic agenda in the transition period and as a continuing high priority for the party, sociologist Judith Astelarra (2005:279) states that the low birth rates *can* be seen as a success for these policies. Changes in abortion and contraceptive laws were one of the first measures for enhanced gender equality to be taken by PSOE in power (Astelarra 2005:279). These measures, combined with enhanced possibilities to get an education, a job, and a salary, have

[41] *SINA* – the Valencian word for breast – is an organization that specifically aims at enhancing breast-feeding in Spain but its wider aim is to improve maternity conditions in general. Further, it tries to implicate fathers in the process, as well as mothers, emphasizing the importance of co-parenthood. *SINA´*s work is based on the "help to self help idea".

increased women´s ´property in their persons´ (Pateman 1998:168), and none of my informants would claim otherwise than this being a development that women benefit from. However, my material indicates, that interpreting the decreasing birth rates *solely* as a result of women taking advantage of and enjoying these legislative changes, might be too simplified an analysis. Rather, I argue, that the low birth rates can also indicate failure in the strivings for equal opportunities. Housewives tend to give birth to more children than do women who also work outside the home (Astelarra 2005), for example, and some of my informants said explicitly that they would have liked to have more children, had only society offered better conditions to combine motherhood with paid work or to choose only motherhood during a period in one´s life.

This chapter serves to describe and analyze tensions in mothering discourses and practices. Building on the preceding chapter, my aim is to further explore the impossible project of combining the two worlds of work and motherhood, with a particular focus on why motherhood in itself has become an ambiguous idea.

I first give a historical background to the contemporary renegotiations of motherhood, followed by a discussion on women´s postponing having babies. Thereafter motherhood as a very varied and ambiguous bodily experience is described, followed by a section that discusses *how* to be a mother. Here I give examples of and analyze the constant collision and intertwinement of on the one hand collectively sanctioned ideals on motherhood and on the other hand the idea that ”modern” society is liberated from norms and that each individual should act according to her inner desire. This collision becomes even clearer in the last section on male partners´ role and the ambivalent attitude women expressed in regard to parenthood as shared. Taken together the sections point to the tensions in motherhood practices and discourses that seem to contribute to the stress so many women experienced.

3.1 Motherhood in Spain – a Historical Background

To give an account of motherhood in Spain in the early 2000s, a short historical odyssey is relevant. As stated in the introductory chapter, during the Franco era motherhood was the leading trope in the formation of the particular version of fascist state ideology elaborated by General Franco and his Falangist Party. The Mother was the guardian of The Catholic Family, which was the pillar of the Spanish (Castilian) state, “...the main duty of mothers under fascist or Francoist rule was to be the first agents of indoctrination for the regime...///...the family became the means to achieve total loyalty to the state...///...the glorification of the maternal role of women under totalitarianism is essential for understanding how gender was and is

central to authoritarian politics...” (Morcillo 2005:162). Using the trope of motherhood has been central to many dictatorships, for example in Stalin´s Soviet, but the uniqueness of the Spanish case lies in the state´s inextricable link to the Catholic church, which makes the symbol of the Mother even more powerful. As argued by Aurora G. Morcillo, the discourse on state control of women´s bodies (in the form of securing first chastity in young women, then securing women as vital guardians of family heritages) is a very clear practice of what Foucault has termed bio-power (ibid).

As Mother and Housewife, the woman was desexualized, and the practice of breast feeding was thereby not taboo but rather enforced as a powerful symbol helping to differentiate between young potentially sexual women and Mothers. Young women´s chastity had to be guarded (Collier 1997)) but once married with children, women´s focus allegedly shifted, with men and women inhabiting rather separate worlds. Although the nuclear family was the base and leading ideal in Franco´s Spain, everyday life and work was carried out in sharply gender marked collectivities. Morcillo (2005) shows that the practices emanating from the monolithic ideology around the Catholic mother and (house)wife, were not static and one sided, but rather diverse and dynamic. To just mention one example of this dynamism, when Spain in the fifties first began to become integrated in a global market economy, the regime (and conservative women in favor of it), made sure to open up *some* avenues for women, without ever risking her dedication to her first role: that of mother. One example was the creation of house wife organizations, with the aim to make housewifery (even more) attractive to women, and to produce *better* housewives, apt and ready to take on the responsibilities inherent in the emerging consumer society (Radcliff 2002*).* The inventiveness of the regime in this respect – and the fact that it was supported by many women - was one of the factors that contributed to the strength of the dictatorship and enabled it to outlast nearly all similar regimes in Western countries.

As stated in the introduction, in the phase of transition, motherhood was not addressed by those favoring *the new Spain*, because of its deeply ideological connection to the dictatorship. The feminist agenda had included the right to work for a salary, and the right to own one´s body, with abortion and contraception as central demands. Motherhood not being acknowledged as a vital political field among progressives did not stop women from becoming mothers. In the beginning of the 1980´s, the aim of massive female entry into paid labour had not yet happened, and the role as mother continued to be the unreflectedly prioritized one.

The feminist agenda has not changed much in the generation that passed since the transition. Its non-addressing motherhood, I interpret as one of the main reasons why quite a few of my informants did not wholly embrace, or outright rejected, feminism. Instead they embraced motherhood, but in practice many waited before realizing it, and some did not realise it at all. This will be discussed in the following section.

3.2 The Late Motherhood

In Benituria, like in most middle class neighborhoods of European cities, the average age for first deliveries had risen (Sobôtka 2009). Most of my informants had reached the age of 30 before having their first baby and a number of them had babies when they were close to 40 or above. The reasons given for "waiting" varied from dreams of seeing the world to not having found a proper job or the right partner. All these reasons can be seen as compatible with a neo-liberal world economy, supported by the individualist discourse that is gaining ground in Spanish society. Travelling, learning things, enjoying life with partner and/or friends, was increasingly seen as a right, for men *and* women, and all this was considered easier to do before having children. Obtaining a secure and reasonably good job before becoming a mother was seen as making dependence on a man less straining, and the importance of economic independence was stressed by almost all the women. One could argue that work was becoming a prerequisite for motherhood, which in turn was becoming an obstacle to women´s work and further careers. Finally, finding the right partner is an argument that has both to do with individual pleasure – one has the right to live with a partner to whom one is attracted and with whom one is in love – but also ideals of equality in marriage and parenthood.

Thus, I argue that the postponing of motherhood is a result of two sides of the individualist discourse mentioned above. First, it has to do with gaining individual pleasure, at least in theory, and secondly, that the (female) individual is expected to take on more responsibility – not only for the reproductive chores, but also now in the so called productive sphere. Even though some (especially the older generation) argue against its desirability, Spanish motherhood has to a large extent come closer to involving what Arnlaug Leira terms "both earner and carer aspects" (1998:160). In the light of this, it is rather logical that many women place great stress on finding the right partner, one that will both support their female partners´ working outside the home and be willing to take on domestic chores. Quite a few of my informants had left the steady relationships/marriages they had had early in life, when realizing that it was not the right person to start a family with. They had started anew with

another man, but as was shown in the preceding chapter, in most cases, the new partner equally did not meet with standards of equality and collaboration.

One woman who had postponed motherhood, and thus contributed to the low birth rate statistics referred to above, was Luísa, 34. When I got to know her, she was on sick leave from a stressful and chaotic professional life and on medication for depression. She felt that she and her husband hardly shared anything, and expressed many doubts and insecurity as to how to live her life. Having entered adulthood with high expectations on both work- and family life, she was now deeply disappointed in both. Born and raised in Benituria, she had lived a few years with her husband in another city, but now, on sick-leave and lonely, she spent half of her time in that city and the other half in Benituria, back in her parents´ home. Her parents did not support this arrangement, but rather insisted on her staying by her husband´s side. They were also upset that she had not managed to hold on to her profession, the training for which they had supported economically. When she got married six years earlier, Luísa had suggested to her husband that they postpone parenthood, until they both (or at least the husband) had done their *oposiciones* "...but here we are now...", she sighs bitterly, "...without children and without having done our oposiciones...[i e without secure jobs]...". She says that she misses being a mother, and speculates as to whether a pregnancy as newlywed, perhaps would have kept her from falling into depressions.

The late pregnancies have brought with them consequences of all kinds, among which I here let Alicia exemplify the use of amniocentesis, the technique used to determine whether a fetus is prone to develop Down´s syndrome. I got to follow her second pregnancy closely, and on our way to one of many visits to the midwife, Alicia mentioned in passing that she was waiting for an appointment to do the test. I did not immediately understand the meaning of the Spanish word, and she explained casually "to determine whether the baby has Downs or not". I did not question her further on the subject, but the way she brought it up and the tone of her voice revealed that taking the test or not was not an issue for her. American anthropologist Rayna Rapp, who has investigated attitudes towards amniocentesis in an urban, American context, poses the relevant question whether this (and other techniques) is to be considered a new possibility for women to control their lives or just adding more stress and anxiety to their already strained life conditions. She asks whether we are reaching towards "the limits of selflessness that mothers are alleged to have" and are witnessing an actual transformation of the meaning of motherhood, in an era of high female labor participation, later marriages (and later birth-giving), etc (Rapp 1991:389). Investigating a field, where motherhood is *actually transforming* in many aspects, I argue that mothers still give highest

priority to their mother role. The fact, for example, that Alicia did not want to give birth to a child with Downs, *can* be a consequence of an awareness of limited possibilities to take good care of the child (short maternity leave, etc), in other words a very responsible way of acting. I am not saying that self-interest cannot have an influence here, but it is difficult to pin down what is to be considered selfish behavior and what is not. Also IVF treatments (which will be expanded on below) and adoptions (although not a reproductive strategy in the strict biological sense of the word) can be seen from these diametrically opposed perspectives. They are often painful and long processes, and it is important to discuss if women put themselves through them only to reach the last stage of self-fulfillment, motherhood, after marrying and starting a career. I agree with Rapp´s conclusion that "...reproductive ´choices´ are far more than individual and psychological. Broad demographic, sexual, reproductive patterns are ultimately *social* patterns contextualized by the rationalities of class, race, ethnicity, sex, religious background, family and reproductive history, and not simply by individual ´risks and benefits´..." (ibid:383).

3.3 Becoming a Mother

In the following I focus on the physical aspects of motherhood. The reason for exposing this material so explicitly is that it points in such a concrete way to ambivalence and insecurity – leading to the stressed motherhood that I aim to understand. As stated in the introduction, the stress is not just a consequence of failing infrastructures such as the lack of trustworthy day care, too short a parental leave and a social security system that discriminates against women. It is also about cultural norms, for example those that do not acknowledge and support women but rather perpetuate taboos around female bodies and insecurities about the "right" practices.

3.3.1 Becoming Pregnant – at what Cost?

One of my informants had gone through an adoption process, another of them an IVF treatment, to become mothers. In Spain, the numbers of both these practices – IVF and adoption - are steadily increasing, partly due to the late motherhood aspirations described above. Susana commented laughingly "my IVF-street" where a number of women had become pregnant through this method. In her own case, this way of conceiving was a consequence of a few miscarriages, and thus necessary, but turned out to be the *ideal* way because it was very controlled and "safe". In an interview with me, she talked about her miscarriages with pain in her voice: "...I had two miscarriages...mentally, it was tough...you

see...to desire a daughter, to desire a daughter...and not be able to keep the pregnancy...", but also concluding strongly that "...the pregnancy is a myth..."[42]. The contradicting feelings she expressed – grieving the miscarriages and the next minute declaring that pregnancy is a myth – is an example of the cultural negotiations around motherhood and gender that are being played out in post-transition Benituria. Gloria also negotiates with herself, but from another angle. During coffee at a bar, she tells about her close friend who has gone through IVF treatment many times without result, and for whom it has become "an obsession". Gloria looks horrified speaking about this kind of "manipulation of the body", "...just imagine...the period and 1000 times worse...". However, she realizes that "the obsession" is not so surprising, given that "...every time she visits me...", Gloria says, "...and sees what is my life, my everything, my family, she gets reminded of what she is missing out on and that hurts...".

3.3.2 Giving Birth – "in Public" or "in Private"

Most of my informants had, for different reasons, given birth in public hospitals. Either it just happened that way or they could not afford a private clinic. There were also those who opposed using the private sector on ideological grounds. Alicia, for example, could see the advantage of private hospitals´ guarantee to a room of one´s own, but claimed that it should be a right for everyone, not only for those who can pay for it. "...it is like staying in a hotel...", said another of my pro-public informants showing with her face that she found it exaggerated. The women I talked to were all aware of the fact that it is the same doctors, who work in both kinds of hospitals, and that any difference in this respect, is rather to the public´s advantage. One woman said that if you are to deliver in a private clinic, and an emergency situation occurs, you will have to be taken to a public one, where the real specialists are to be found. Even though it did not apply to a majority of the women who participated in my study statistics show that an increasing number of Spanish women give birth "in private". Apart from the comfort offered, there is also the possibility of planned caesareans, which, some women said, makes the delivery easier to fit into women´s often tight schedules. This claim appeared mythical in character. It might have held true for a few women, but none of my informants would be so busy – no matter under how great stress and strain they live – as not to take the time necessary for giving birth whenever it happens. I draw the somewhat bold

[42] The way Susana uses the word *myth* here, I interpret as her way of demystifying/deconstructing the physical aspects of motherhood, reducing its importance and centrality. Let me here also refer to the Norwegian anthropologist Ingrid Oeveraas licentiate thesis (2003) on Spanish motherhood, in which her informants use the word myth in a more general sense: the (alleged) impossibility to live up to societies´ expectations on a mother.

conclusion, that this saying, true or not, was possibly used to distance oneself from "improper" motherhood with wrong priorities.

Whereas lack of time was not referred to as an issue in this particular area, there were indications of fear of pain and difficult deliveries, a resistance to deal with the physical part of motherhood. Scarce preparations were an issue and will be expanded on in the next section.

There were private clinics with the opposite aim: to offer only vaginal deliveries, but with circumstances more pleasant than in the public hospitals. Alarcón was well known and had been used by Magdalena, a journalist in her early thirties. Preparing lunch with her in a mutual friend´s home, I brought up the subject, and she could hardly stop talking about how lucky she was to have delivered in this clinic. She was convinced that giving birth is easy if you are encouraged to follow your "animal instincts" and if you are not forced to lie on your back. Interestingly enough, on another occasion she spontaneously brought up an abortion story from the same clinic and it became clear that aborting women were not treated by far as nicely as delivering women. In the *SINA* self help group, led by my informant Beatríz, quite a few women often referred to Alarcón. In a reunion, to which I had brought Alicia, it was on the agenda again, and somebody said lyrically "...and they put her [the baby] on me right away...". Although it was Alicia´s first (and as will be shown, last) visit to the group, she intervened and broke up the somewhat glorifying atmosphere, by asserting that "...but that they did in El Clínico as well...", referring to her own delivery experiences in a public hospital, with which she was content. Upon visiting Alicia and her new born second child in this clinic, I had difficulties understanding her satisfaction. There was little space between the beds, and at lunchtime an employee literally burst into the room and delivered the trays as fast and efficiently as in a McDonald´s restaurant. I realised my cultural bias, when MariSol, my most "alternative" informant, and whom I would have expected to give birth at Alarcón or at home, also claimed to be satisfied with how she had been received, saying: "...god, you are a number, it is not like ´oy, all so special, beautiful and wonderful, no no, it is a pregnancy and there it is and it is nothing more..../////....but that is not traumatic to me....".

3.3.3 Caesarean or Vaginal Delivery?

The numbers of both planned and acute caesareans are steadily going up in Spain (El País, 2008). There can be various reasons for this: firstly, the fact that women give birth at a later stage in life make vaginal deliveries more difficult and more risky. Hospitals are under great budget strains and caesareans are considered – if complications do not occur – more efficient and less time consuming. Also, as has been argued by Emily Martin (2001), the medical discourse and the (often male) doctors are winning terrain in pregnancy- and delivery care in many Western countries and Spain is no exception in this case, with doctors enjoying a very high status.

There was not so much problematizing of the (not planned) caesareans. "...I did not open up..." was one frequent explanation, "...he did not want to come out..." (attributing subjectivity to the unborn baby) another. More than 50% of the women in my study had gone through caesareans, either planned or emergency ones, and apart from one or two who expressed that they would have liked it to be different, but no harm done, some even expressed content at not having to endure the great pains of a vaginal delivery. When I learned about scarce preparations, and heard stories of fear of pain and discomfort, I began to see the acute caesareans as logical. Alicia expressed how deeply unsatisfied the preparations she was offered in her health centre had left her, "...if the midwife who is responsible for your pregnancy just tells you that it is all about a natural act...///...then why have a midwife at all...". She sought help for herself in a city outside Valencia, and said that thanks to the brilliant preparations she was offered there, she was calm and without fears and had two

deliveries “by the book”. I visited her in the hospital within 24 hours after her second son was born, and could see with my own eyes that all had happened smoothly and left her relaxed and hardly even tired.

The anthropologist Emily Martin´s American informants express perceptions of violation, when describing their deliveries, especially the caesarean ones (Martin 2001:84 ff). Beatríz, who I introduced in the beginning of this chapter, was the closest I came to a similar story, probably because we always talked about these things – her SINA activism being at the core of her life and the raison d´être for her becoming my informant. One day, on our way to a SINA reunion in the city centre, I for the first time realised the personal roots of her activism. She talked for a long time about the situation in general terms; how the private clinics sell their caesarean ideology with promises of bikini cuts, how it is the male gynaecologists and their mechanistic, medicalized view of the female body and the life-giving process that rule the delivery departments of the hospitals, etc. It was not until we were about to get off the bus to walk the last part, that she suddenly- with pain in her voice and tears in her eyes - told her own caesarean story. Especially her second caesarean (which according to Beatríz herself was not necessary but done without her outspoken consent) had made her feel violated. It may even be, she said, that the traumatic experiences made her feel the need to breast-feed her son for so long (until the age of four). Having heard her talk so enthusiastically about the advantages of long term breast feeding, it surprised me that she now almost problematized this long breast feeding period, connecting it to a deeply traumatic and negative experience.

3.3.4 Breast-Feeding or the Bottle?

During my time in the field, the theme of breast feeding was addressed again and again, with the UN recommendation[43] known and visible: in the midwife´s office there were posters about the advantages of breast feeding and about 50% of my informants had practiced it[44]. However, the practice was not coherently integrated in discourses on motherhood, and among my informants´ mothers (who had experienced the transition period) few could understand why their daughters should bother with such a messy practice when there were alternatives. As already said, during the transition period breast feeding was considered one of many obstacles to women´s liberation and access to the labour market, which was why breast feeding became

[43] The UN recommendation on breast-feeding is six months as a minimum (WHO 2014).
[44] This number is consistent with the latest *National Survey of Health* (2006) which showed that the estimated prevalence of breastfeeding in children from 6 months to 4 years was 68.4% at 6 weeks after birth and 52.48% and 24.72% at 3 and 6 months respectively.

contested, by some outright rejected. To some extent, this argument could hold true also in the time of my field work, considering the very short period of maternity leave.

Amparo, who was in her late forties, had seen many changes but also conservatism in certain areas, and she talked to me about persisting taboos of breasts and their sexual connotations. The many testimonies to feelings of discomfort in - or simply rejection of - giving the breast can surely be attributed to sexual taboos, even though not pronounced in those terms. In the following passage, Gloria expresses her contradicting feelings; first in the interview she says that breast-feeding is "...good and convenient...", shortly after followed by "...the truth is that it is a hassle...to take out your breast in the street.../...to me, that is not a nice experience..../...and it seems wonderful... [talking about Soledad, a friend, who always breast-feeds in public]...but for me.../...I don´t feel comfortable...". Susana was more confident in her rejection, "...I would never decide to give the breast...it seems to me absolutely ridiculous..../...with the breast out there and then the breasts down here...[showing vividly how her breasts would fall to her knees]... and the milk and....NO...". Susana was the most outspoken in this respect, and in her case it had obviously to do with ideals of bodily perfection. But most of those who had not breast-fed did not problematize this further and did not go beyond "simple" explanations like "....she could not suck hold...", "...I had no milk...". Complaints about not getting the relevant information/assistance/help in the hospital or later on were rare, only Beatríz was explicit on this. As the vice chair person of SINA who had committed her life to enhancing natural (vaginal) births and breast-feeding, that was logical.

None of the women who had given the bottle related this to equality arguments. When I came back to Benituria after a three months´ break, Alicia had stopped breast-feeding her baby daughter Imelda, who was now about four months old. She had breast-fed her first born for eight months, but this time she had decided to give the bottle parallel with the breast from the start to be able to "better control" how much the baby ate. Since she seemed so content she decided to leave the breast-feeding altogether. When I made a comment on the convenience that also the father could do the feeding, Alicia shook her head; Miguel had said that feeding is "for mothers". She seemed a bit surprised at his refusal, since he happily gave their first child the bottle.

That many women felt awkward breast-feeding in public, may seem at odds with the fact that sex related matters were much less taboo than they used to be, but is rather quite logical. As opposed to the Franco era, when mothers were discursively only mothers, and thus breast-feeding lacked sexual connotations, now a mother was also a sex object/subject, expected to stay fit, beautiful and attractive to men in general and to her (male)

partner in particular. Breasts were definitely one of the most important sex symbols, and the common talk that many girls get a breast surgery for their 18th birthday – be it true or not – became a clear illustration of this.

In the next section, I get closer to the core of my research aim: has the stress inherent in the role of mother to do with the lack of consensus on what constitutes a proper motherhood? What is a good mother? By different levels of negotiating, the investigated generation of Spanish mothers had to invent the wheel again, and by that I mean that there were no self-evident role models, yet attitudes lingered and the echoing of Franco´s Mother (though not pronounced as that) may not be ignorable.

3.4 Being a Proper Mother

> "…maybe motherhood means something else for me than for some other mothers…///…I would never leave my daughter of four months to strangers…this goes for me, I am not saying that it is a bad thing to do…this is important…that one does what one desires, what one is comfortable with…".

Here Soledad gives a typical example of the dominating individualist stance. Moral arguments as to what was best in some general sense did not guide utterances, but rather the emphasis was constantly put on the importance of the right to an individual choice, based on an "own" desire. Elisa, a pre-school teacher, talked emotionally about the subject of busy parents whose children got to suffer from their parents´ lack of time, however carefully emphasizing that it was *her* way of seeing things. The individual´s taste and choice was referred to, explicitly, as the most important factor that should determine how in the end one´s family life (and other areas in life) was organized. What may be constructed, perceived and described as a kind of freedom from norms (at least among the reasonably educated middle class), I suggest is a process of *de-doxification*. Phrases like "before it was all about appearances" and "people are more authentic", contrasted a conservative, normative "before" with a modern, norm-less "now", in which people were believed to live more in accordance with their "true selves", their "hearts" (Giddens 1991). It became quite clear, that the investigated generation of women wanted to express a distance to the society their mothers grew up and some of them started their families in, a society where General Franco and the Catholic Church set the norms to live by and where only one good and approved way to live one´s life existed. However, this *individualist ethics* (del Valle 2002), was not only a reaction to old Spain, but

also quite compatible with the neoliberal imperative that comes with EU membership and integration into a globalized capitalism.

Simultaneously, the norms surrounding the institution of motherhood had hardly vanished, but rather multiplied in scale and scope, and above all – become more varied and subject to cultural negotiations. That motherhood was on the agenda at the time of my field work could not go unnoticed. There were several magazines that treated the subject, as well as TV shows, and the insecurity as to how to be a (proper) mother among the women in Benituria, was evident in practice and discourse. Gloria, in an interview, said: "...I am convinced that I am doing a disastrously bad job.../...I am too strict....I get very nervous...I...lose my way...". To an outsider like me, it was beyond comprehension that such a responsible and loving parent as Gloria could express such insecurity.

I seldom heard women explicitly complain that they had not got enough or the relevant information/education on how to take care of babies and children, and that this would be to blame for the insecurity they often felt, but it did pop up. As mentioned above, Alicia was very explicit about her discontent with her delivery preparations. Further, I noticed that she brought her son to the doctor on many occasions, and Alicia once said in passing that had she been informed at an early stage that a high fever is normal and common in children, it would have saved her many visits to the health central. My first reaction, upon hearing this, was to wonder why her mother had not reassured her. I did not express my wonders to Alicia, but it soon became clear that she was rather ambivalent about asking her mother´s advice. This was one of many examples, where the lack of role models showed in a very concrete way, or where the role models that did exist, the grandmothers, were not seen as updated. Their knowledge and experiences were not considered useful or even applicable to the present situation.

Virginia´s critique paralleled that of Alicia´s, but treated the post-delivery period:

> "...I, a complete non expert.../...they give it to you when it is four days old and they say ´home you go´.../...and you arrive home.../...what do I do.../...or if I have to give him a bath....the first day my brother gave him a bath, I had no idea....I did not know how to grab him, because there [in the hospital] they give him baths.../...what will they teach you, they don´t teach you anything, anything, they give it to you and they say ´here you go, now you have a son´ and you come home and....what do I do?....?"

Elisa, the pre-school teacher, testifies that:

> "...many people don´t know, you see...they don´t really know then when they get a child what it is they have in their hands....they don´t know...they ask me many questions here in the school that I....´how is it possible´...///...they have no idea, they don´t know where they are going...///...they don´t know what to feed them....they don´t know how to seat them....///...or they ask you ´when do they stop crying?´ .... ///...the mothers tell you ´I can´t do it differently....´...".

Between the lines I could read disbelief, discontent. Parents (read mothers) should know how to take care of a child. Whereas Alicia and Virginia wished for experts´ advice, Elisa´s remarks point to a *naturalization* of motherhood, in a similar manner to that of Alicia´s midwife, who did not think that giving birth should require a lot of preparations. The examples given above, pointing to individualization and naturalization of motherhood may first seem incompatible. The individualizing stance is helping to de-naturalize the state of motherhood (individual mothers perceive of and practice it differently). The (re)-naturalization in the idiom of individualism can be framed in the words of Heather Paxson: "A shift from traditional to modern subjectivities does not write nature out of the equation. What it does do is hold individuals personally, individually responsible for *realizing* their natures…" (Paxson 2004:211). Let me return to the concept of responsibility.

To almost all the women, it was important to spend a lot of time with their children, but *how much* a lot of time really was, and *how* that time should be spent was subject to constant negotiations. To a person like Alicia, who said that "...I, what I think is that the first years have to be.....///...then the mother has to be with the child....", the four months of parental leave was considered too short a period, an opinion shared by most of my informants, even though opinions differed on how much longer it should be. Different strategies were used to extend the period, the most common one being to make use of the unemployment security. On my last day of my last field period, I made a good-bye call to Julia, who was my bread supplier and informant. Julia was 32, mother of three-year-old Sofia, and four months old Roberto. Four months meant that the maternity leave was about to expire, and Julia told me on this our last conversation, that she was now struggling to get her unemployment security, to make possible another four months at home with her son. The employment office (*Instituto de Empleo*) had proved not easily convinced, requesting her to apply for jobs at bakeries, so in view of that, Julia said, she might as well go back to work for her father again. The rest of the family were all employed in her father´s baking company, which meant many advantages in Julia´s struggle to get her life together, compared to those who had to work for strangers. The bread shops, Julia´s home and Sofia´s school were all

located in the *barrio*, within walking distance, so Julia could easily leave her daughter at the bakery with the husband or the mother, while she herself went to work in one of the bread shops. Or her mother could pick Sofia up from school, after having closed the shops for siesta break. The bakery was located in the old parts of Benituria, where people lived their lives more in the streets, than they did in the new parts, where Julia had her home. Therefore, the bakery also offered Sofia more freedom in her playing, which Julia found important. So, all in all, even though she sighed when relating her frustrating attempts to stay home longer, and even though her job in the bread shops was both physically and mentally exhausting at time, Julia found herself privileged.

Susana, on the other hand, started working before the four months of parental leave had expired. Her company was located close to her home, and she had a baby-sitter in whom she confided. Her job implied many trips and she spent quite a lot of time away from her daughter. However, she was careful to compensate for this:

> "...since I have to work away from home [often abroad], I am never separated from my daughter here, meaning that I do not take her to my mother, or my father, like other people do....you see...., my daughter is not with her grandparents, nor with her aunts and uncles...for me to be able to go for a drink....no, the girl is with me always....and now, it is the first time that we will be separated for a week....it hurts a lot....".

She is here referring to a business trip that will last for one week, and her eyes reveal that the pain is there for real. She thinks it will work out, because her husband has got used to his role as a father and he and his daughter are now much closer than they used to be. On another occasion, I get further proof of Susana´s dedication to her daughter. The group of mothers, (and sometimes a father), who take their daughters to the same theatre class have picked up their daughters and are slowly moving along the main street. This day Susana is not with us – instead it is her husband Carlos, who has picked the girl up. Suddenly Gloria´s mobile phone rings – it is Susana who wants to know about her daughter´s health state (obviously the daughter has been given a shot which has resulted in some swelling – I have not even noticed that something is wrong with her – she seems her regular jolly, lively self). Carlos does not have his mobile phone with him or does not hear it, and Gloria comments afterwards his *tranquilidad*[45], so the whole thing has to go through Gloria. I can easily hear Susana´s loud and worried voice on the other end – and Gloria calming and reassuring her friend that Carlos has done what he should and that the girl is fine.

[45] *Tranquilidad* means literally calmness. For a further discussion of the word, see the next section.

Julia and Susana here came to illustrate what I interpreted as the classed dimension of how time was perceived in relation to child care. For Julia it was quite obvious not as connected to active parenting; rather the idea was that children should have adults close by so as to feel secure. It was also clear, that Julia confided completely in other parts of the family, were it the child´s father, grandmother or aunt, whereas Susana had complete confidence only in herself and in her nanny. She well exemplified child care / upbringing as an area of specialization, a separated, specialized activity, connected with both space and time. In the early eighties, children were *integrated in* and *independent from* domestic and parents´ life, simultaneously, in the sense that their parents (mothers) could easily perform domestic work, while keeping an eye on their children, who played in the street. In the first decade of the new century, I read the middle class ideal construction of children as both *separated from* and *dependent on* parents and homely activities. Therefore Alicia´s stress about everything she had to do in the relatively few hours that her son spent at a nursery school.

Public space had come to hold more threats to children´s security, but I find it relevant to speak of "real" versus "perceived" dangers. It was a fact that traffic had increased tremendously in the area, posing a real threat to living creatures, but it was likewise true that parents were also afraid of other less well-defined dangers. This can be interpreted as connected to the discourses on individual responsibilities. The idea that one is 100% responsible for children´s security, well-being, during their childhood years and also for their prospective future happiness and success, makes the burden of motherhood almost impossible to carry.

As shown in the example with Julia, in the specialization practices, the intersection of gender and class were clearly visible. Among the lower middle/working class cluster the separation of activities was not as clear as in the middle class cluster. Collective bar visits with children included were common here. Alicia I placed in an intermediate position – her husband had advanced from blue collar worker to a rather well paid managerial position, and she had studied to be a nurse. In her family I encountered an interesting mix of middle class values/practices, which included child care as separate activity, and working class practices. I will give an example of the last in the next section, and show that it is also gendered.

Specializing procedures were evidently linked to the idiom and practices of individualism, which in turn called for an individual assuming a heavy responsibility. I perceived motherhood among most women I met as being mainly about responsibilities and

obligations, for which I found support in the study by Teresa del Valle et al, who conclude that "…as maternity is de-naturalized, the importance of the dimension of responsibility and obligation increases, and sentiments are put in the second place…" (del Valle et al 2002:173). My partly frustrated attempts at organizing group discussions first seemed the epitome of this responsible (individualist) motherhood. After having failed many attempts, I thought I had found the perfect opportunity to conduct at least one group interview. I was to go out for dinner with a group of mothers, and suggested to Gloria that the group come to my home an hour before dinner time, to have a drink and discuss the themes set by me. Gloria checked with the others and reported back, that they all liked my suggestion, but that it was simply not possible to squeeze in. After having fed their children, put them to bed and read them their story, the women would have just the time necessary to get dressed, put make up on and then come straight to the bar. Obviously, the solution that came to my mind, that the fathers take care of the night rituals, did not come up as an alternative. I later came to interpret the mothers´ declining my offer, to be as much about sentiments as about obligations. The nightly procedures were too important in building close maternal bonds, to be easily handed over to the other parent. The responsible mother was also a mother that felt true inner love, and who wanted to spend as much time as possible with her child. Thus, I diverge from del Valle et al, and interpret my material as showing that the sentimental value of motherhood in itself for the mothers was very important. It was simply obvious that motherhood was truly enjoyed, in spite of all the stress and strain in almost all the women´s lives, and also that they placed great emphasis on the importance of transmitting a loving and caring attitude towards their children. The *doxic*[46] discourse on motherhood as sacrifice so salient during Franco times and living on during the transition, now seemed to be fading out.

Emily Martin has applied the Marxist alienation concept, on motherhood, with arguments – among others - that external factors, such as socio-economic ones, determine if and when and how many children women should bear and deliver, that the mother is isolated from other mothers, because of the nuclear family ideology, and that they feel isolated from the fathers of the children, who rather than collaborating in family life and child up-bringing, stand as sole representatives of the larger societies´ values and ideologies (Martin 2001:19). To a certain extent this analyses fits my material. And taken together, it does speak of *loneliness* in motherhood. I would however not go as far as to use alienation, because it brings to mind experiences of meaninglessness. Rather, I conclude that motherhood *brought further*

[46] In the Bourdieuan sense.

meaning and joy to my informants´ lives, new dimensions that helped them develop as human beings. The loneliness was in part related to the unwillingness on part of many fathers to collaborate. Most of the women described their partners as more interested in their work, their computers and their football, than taking part in family life, which was reflected in the values they come to stand for.

This brings me to the topic of fatherhood, or rather how fatherhood was perceived by mothers. In a society, where *old Spain´s* gender complementarity was being reinvented in individualist disguise - and where divorce figures were low in a comparative European perspective - it is clear that motherhood cannot be discussed in isolate, without its ideological and practical complementing other, fatherhood.

3.5 Who and what is a Father – Ambivalence about a Shared Project

> Karin: Do the concept of mother and the concept of father have the same meaning to you?
> Virginia: yes...ah...no, a huge [difference], a mother gives it [the child], everything and thinks always first about the child and after that about herself....and a father...well, this is generalizing....
> Karin: But in your case?
> Virginia: Ah, in my case , well, I cannot complain, meaning that my husband adores the child, loves him above everything, but yes, there are times when he does things…that I would not do….///…the boy was 9-10 days when Valencia was playing, the league, Champion´s League…////…I understand my husband, ok…///…I am also a fan, well…now less since I got the boy…..///…I was the one who more than others…..///…..the flag, the scarf….I travelled to Paris for the finals in Champion´s League and I was pregnant but I did not know yet…./////….30 hours in a train….this is why I am telling you that I also understand him…////…it was the first time that Valencia played in Champion´s and they were meeting Manchester….Manchester!!!..."

Virginia and her husband, in her opinion, shared equally the responsibilities and duties of both the house chores and the care for their son. Virginia worked full time on a shift job until the boy turned four, and in her afternoon shift weeks the husband had put their son to bed and given him his bottle. But here Virginia chooses to tell me about an occasion, when her partner had prioritized going to a foot-ball game to being with his family precisely in the period when she perceived that collaboration and joint parenthood was most essential. If I read her correctly it said something about men still being able to choose more freely when they want to

spend time with and take care of their offspring, as opposed to women who were still expected to be there always and completely.. From Virginia´s and other stories I concluded that it was not always the time (in a quantitative sense) spent with the children (although that in many cases was an important factor as well), that was the problem from an equality perspective, but rather how that time was spent and when one chose not to be there.

Even though, on a direct question, most informants claimed motherhood and fatherhood to mean the same thing to them, in other contexts it became clear that – also as expressed by women – expectations of a good parenthood were greater on mothers, and that – consequently – women were more entitled to the children:

> "...before I had children I thought that it was the same..../////...I mean that I was one of those who think that when a couple is divorced, the man has the same rights as the woman....the children are as much his as they are hers... that it is absolutely the same...../////...now that I have children, and besides I have them with a man who is not a machista....it is not the same.....well, to begin with you carry them with you for nine months, when they are not with him....it is nine months..../////...they seek you out more.....in my case...eh...and this you cannot generalize...because, obviously, there are exceptions....in my case and from what I have seen in general, the children seek the mother out more...../////...there is an explanation also.....almost all of us dedicate more time to them than do men, that is certain, but it is also..../////...I mean, he had to learn more to be a father than I....because of education, instinct, because I had more desire to...../// ...for whatever reason, I don´t know why...".

Vicenta expands on the topic and tries to account for the obvious difference between her and her partner in their attitudes towards the children. She is one of few in my material, who defines herself as a feminist, and her initial words, "...I thought it was the same...", is in line with her feminism. The change of heart on the matter does not add up to her, and she tries to find satisfying keys as to why she feels that motherhood and fatherhood imply different experiences and different roles, difficult (and maybe not even desired) to escape.

When it came to the care and education of the children, almost all the women expressed disappointment in their husbands and not so few worries. In describing the male partner´s attitude a word that came up frequently was *tranquilo*. Literally the word means "calm", but was often used with connotations of "cannot be bothered", "is not interested". Thus, it is used by the women to criticize in a subtle, ironic way. This would at first glance seem to contradict that there were also many references to strictness, impatience, irritation, even anger, but I came to interpret them as quite compatible. Not worrying so much about the

education, rather watching football or working on the computer[47], would naturally lead to an undermined parental authority which in turn would cause parental frustration and exaggerated strictness, even authoritarianism in random cases.

Although Soledad subscribes to ideas of gender equality, and grieves that her husband is not thoroughly committed to their children and to family life, she expresses sensing motherhood as something very particular, and would not have given up the time at home with her children had her husband wanted to be more involved. To become a mother was "always" a central desire, yet, she had ended up postponing having children. She expresses many worries about her partner failing in his practical parts of fatherhood, keeping things in its place, teaching norms in a convincing way by perpetuating routines. When Soledad had spent one night away, she came home at midday, to find both husband and children in their pyjamas, still eating breakfast. Additionally she talks about the emotional aspect:

> "...the smallest details...a word....a stroke....in the right moment is more meaningful and more important...than a super gift which the father brings home...of course, he fails more...maybe it is because I had to take on great responsibilities in my childhood....maybe I am too...."

In Alicia´s case, the gendered difference in attitude was expressed in less subtle ways. When her two-year-old son during the *Fallas* festivities was too afraid to throw fire-crackers, his father eagerly tried to convince him, without success. Miguel seemed eager to inculcate manliness in his son. One afternoon I was invited to lunch at Alicia´s. Miguel showed up as well, not keen on the vegetarian paella that Alicia and I had enjoyed. Without us noticing, time had flown, and suddenly it was time to get Marcos back to his day care centre. Miguel offered to take him, walked into the bedroom where the boy was still sound asleep, and came out in the hallway. Marcos did not want to leave his mother, and his crying and desperate clinging to her was heartbreaking. When Miguel returned, he said that Marcos had been crying for his mother the whole way to his day care centre, a not acceptable behavior for a big boy. By the look on her face, Alicia was not as convinced.

Alicia talked a lot about adapting one´s life to the needs of the children, and it became obvious that she and her husband had quite different opinions on what their children needed. During the annual *barrio* festivities in September, I accompanied the family, which on this particular day also consisted of Miguel´s sister who was visiting, to the market

[47] This may seem a stereotypical way of describing male partners in my field. However, these kinds of images were extensively used by the women, literally or metaphorically, when speaking about their partners.

occupying the whole *barrio* centre. We walked the crowded streets, looked at what the stands had to offer, listened to music...Marcos was excited. Later we were joined by two friends, a couple, which, Alicia told me they had used to go out with a lot, but who had seemed to lose interest when Alicia and Miguel had become parents. We all ended up in a crowded, noisy, smoky bar, which offered one free *tapa* for each ordered beer. Three rounds of beer were ordered by the men during the short time we spent in the bar, and there were many jokes about me going for the smallest size. Alicia did not drink, due to her pregnancy. At one point, Marcos was instructed by his father to carry a round from the bar back to our table (with fatherly assistance). Alicia shook her head and looked resigned. There was talk about going out later on[48] - for concerts and dancing on the church plaza. When we split outside the bar it was already nine and time to get home and cook dinner. Alicia promised to call if they were to decide to go out. To my relief – I was tired – she called to say that they had decided to stay home after all. When I saw her the next time, she said that she had been relieved but Miguel disappointed when the other couple had cancelled. She also commented that Miguel wished for them to get out more, and consequently thought that Alicia was trying too much to adapt their lives to Marcos´ needs.

By lifting these examples of Alicia and her husband, I further aim to point to the intersection of gender and class. Bars were considered and said to be the main attraction for many men[49] (Gilmore 2012), and not frequenting them could easily be interpreted as an adaptation to female partners and family life. Whereas Alicia was positioned in a border land between working- and middle class habits and values, informants that were clearly delineated as middle class had less reason to worry about bar visits and were instead centering their critique around male partners´ extensive computer use, and its detrimental effect on men´s interest in and commitment to their children. Computer use was winning ground as gender differentiator and interpreted as "an escape route from domestic responsibilities" that men took but women did not. One woman expressed it as "he comes home… and he enters his cave…". I had the impression that it was many times work that was performed on those computers, but it was nevertheless interpreted as a freedom marker, replacing the drink at the

[49] In Benituria, women were seen in many bars, yet almost exclusively in the company of men. There were also a large number of bars that were frequented by males only. For a discussion on changing norms and practices in this in Spain so vital gendered space see David Gilmore´s article *Bar Wars: Changing Geographies of Gender in Spain*.

bar after work. On the other end, among the working class crowd, women´s critique of male partners as fathers, never touched upon either computers or bars. Computers were not by far as common here and bars were not considered a threat to family relations.

Last, let me give a glimpse from a meeting at the organization *SINA*, whose member and local activist Beatríz became an important informant. She argued forcefully that feminists´ prioritizing the fight for the right to work rather than to motherhood, was harmful to most women. My informants questioned feminism exactly on that ground and, often with arguments echoing of difference feminism. Beatríz told me that many career women (who were the vast majority in the organization) had burst into tears in the self-help groups, something I also got to witness. The group I took part in was very tight, and although men were also welcome, I only met one man during my visits.[50] The noise in the room was sometimes deafening, not only the children, but also the mothers contributed to it. On one occasion, a woman entering showed irritation at the noise and made an ironic comment. Later, while breast-feeding her two-year-old girl the same woman suddenly burst into tears, saying that she no longer wanted to give the breast at night, but that the daughter was craving it, that she did not get to sleep at all, that she felt anger and guilt at the same time. Between the sobs, out came the story of an IVF-treatment, agreed between spouses, a separation during pregnancy, initiated by the husband, a demand for a maternity test, and then from a first refusal on part of the father to deal with the baby to a demand to share equally. The deafening noise had subsided and all present women listened attentively, one woman put her hand on the crying woman. Another woman said that she did everything at home, "I can´t take it anymore". Gender difference was established as an inevitable fact when the crying woman said that men seek the [natural] closeness that exists between the mother and the child, and concluded that this can never happen, because "...after all a woman is a woman and a man is a man...".

In my interpretation, this story shows us – again – the ambivalence about the shared project, expressed in a constant oscillating between on the one hand "modern" discourses on gender similarity, and disappointment in men´s not living up to these discourses, and on the other hand the ideas on "natural" difference, as a comforting explanation.

American anthropologist Jane Collier, whose study and re-study on family and kinship in a village in Southern Spain (1997) has inspired me, explores the notion of

[50] Even though SINA claimed to promote responsible parenthood, regardless of sex, their clear emphasis on long-term breast-feeding as a bonding tool, left the fathers aside, except as *supporters*.

"modern" family life, and reads it as an arena perceived as secure and relaxed[51]. This is a part, where my interpretation differs from Collier´s. As has been shown, my informants express great insecurity and sense of loneliness, in relation to, first and foremost, their (male) partners. Partners´ (perceived) disinterest in children and home life, is often taken personally and creates an insecurity as to whether one is really loved by ones partner. However, in spite of all frustration and displeasure, in the end, partners´ not showing commitment and not doing their share are justified with individualist arguments, and phrases like "he likes", "he is better at", "I prefer", "I am happy doing", "maybe I am too demanding", are constantly used. "…I care for my children, I care for my husband…///…but it is also a beautiful thing to care for…I do it because I am happy with it…". Here, Gloria emphasizes her own choice, following her inner wish/desire. Motherhood – and family life – has to be based on desire, rather than duty, which is in line with Collier, whose book is named "From duty to desire".

Maybe this has something to do with what Meg Luxton points to as a distinguishing characteristic of contemporary social life: that most relationships, including those based on kin, are perceived as voluntary (Luxton 2010:177), which makes it difficult to sustain a critical attitude towards them. Despite the fact that still, in Spanish society, familial ideologies hold a strong foothold, the actual (legalized) possibility to terminate relationships, make the responsibilities of "choice" great also in this area, and my informants testified that the possibility to "choose" a life partner was a vital difference between them and their mothers.

3.6 Concluding

In this chapter, I have shown the ambiguity with which women embark on and pursue the project of motherhood. Alongside findings of great joy many data indicated stress and doubts. I have concluded that women did not perceive of motherhood as inherent in them as women; rather they expressed great insecurities as to how to be good mothers. Simultaneously, there *was* a discourse on inherent motherhood, which was juxtaposed to men´s incapabilities and disinclination with regard to fatherhood and family life. This apparent paradox was logical in a setting, where gender was in transition and heavily and constantly negotiated. As I argued elsewhere, people could afford to express insecurities 30 years after General Franco had been buried and the new political system was sufficiently consolidated to resist ambivalence, also from those that had been in favor of the change. In their mothers´ generation, children had

[51] Juxtaposed to an outer capitalist world based on cold competition and greed.

arrived, and with them motherhood. Even though the discourse on progress (Thurén 1988) had demanded that women take the full step into public work life, most women had not (yet) entered salaried work, and if so, they had stayed at home when the children were born. There had (still) been role models. My informants´ generation had to tread new ground, ploughed by the generation before them, but not sown until now, in their acknowledging needs and desires to be workers *and* mothers. They were also the first generation of women to be able to choose not to become mothers. With choice comes a higher degree of responsibility. Spanish anthropologist Carmen Díez expresses it as follows: "...motherhood...../...is lived with total responsibility....a responsibility that we can see as a continuation of what has been the dominant ideology in motherhood, but which incorporates....a bigger burden for women, since it is now perceived as an individual choice...." (Díez 2000:171). Díez´ reasoning that chosen responsibility can be a heavier burden to carry than an openly imposed one, runs counter to the politically liberal notion of (individual) choice as the way to break up the gendered power order. However, the empirical findings of this study were, as shown, rather compatible with Díez. The burden of being responsible for your choice *whether* to be a mother – and then *how* to be a mother – came through in all encounters I had. Here, let me return to Luísa, 34, who had not come to realise motherhood (yet) but doubted whether that really had been to her benefit. So, Luísa, born right before General Franco´s death and raised during the transition period and the liberalization of the sexual sphere, belonging to the first generation who could actually choose *not* to become a mother, in a way constructed this as part of her problem. She was the clearest example of the insecurity, which I saw led to such stress among the women in my research. The insecurity, I have shown, expressed itself in a myriad of ways and led to a myriad of strategies.

4 Summing up and Concluding Discussion

At the time of my investigation, many years of social democratic rule had consolidated the gender equality discourse as main stream; the *doxic* rules (Bourdieu 1997) regarding gender had actually changed in the time lapse of a generation. Franco rising from the dead to take away from women what they had gained did not seem a likely scenario. With that solid base, people could express insecurities in a more complex, tentative way. There was room for a new critical discourse. Another logic reason for the insecurity was women´s lack of role models. Their lives differed from their mothers´ in all possible aspects – "we have nothing in common!" was a common answer when I asked what the difference was between my informant and her mother´s life – and a transferring of knowledge and values across generations appeared very far-fetched. I found that tensions and insecurities were especially experienced and expressed in the discourses and practices around motherhood (partly related to work), and that this in turn, caused women to experience a high degree of stress in their lives. Thus, I focused my research questions and analysis on this.

First and foremost, I discussed the *when* and the *how* to become a mother, and showed with many examples how the late motherhood aspirations brought with them an increased use of IVF and other reproductive techniques. I also showed that practices of childbirth and breast feeding divided the women in many aspects. Taboos around the female body and fear of pain led some to escape these practices, whereas others asked for more of preparations by professionals. Here the contested issue of private maternal care became visible.

I further identified the different spheres, which most visibly contributed to the stress that women referred to in everyday talk, and that I saw acted out in practice. Lack of infrastructural support and non-collaborating partners were the most obvious signs of the discrepancy between gender equality in discourse and inequality in practice. However, reading closely my informants, what was revealed in relation to these inequalities was not a one-sided attitude. I have shown how a myriad of varying strategies were used to *account for* and to *cope with* the difficult and straining situation, but simultaneously that these strategies were problematized in different ways. Involving relatives to help out caused some to feel guilt towards mothers (-in-law) and fathers (-in-law) and worries about "over use", whereas others found this solution to be the most satisfying. Buying external household help was a strategy that was considered normal by all of my informants, but not all could afford it, and it sometimes crashed with the *emic* discourse on *confianza*. When it came to child care this

discourse was even stronger; the consensus I found on the benefits of external housekeeping help was absent here. Even though many found themselves to have no other option than to leave small children in the care of non-kin, it often caused anxiety and guilt. *Confianza* was lacking. In the cases where women expressed satisfaction with a nanny or a nursery, the trust had somehow been partly transferred to professionals. Let me remind you of Alicia, who was very close to her mother, but yet on several occasions expressed distrust in the mother´s ways with the grandchildren. The most common strategy used to conciliate wage labour and motherhood was to prolong the parental leave, by making use of the unemployment security, a method that caused much stress, due to it being so dependent on benign attitudes on part of employment officers. Intensive working week was also a very common strategy (since part time work was hard to acquire), and so was determination and efforts to obtain – in the end – a state employment.

The coping strategies were accompanied by different ways of accounting for the gap between Spain´s (the government´s) forceful stand on gender equality and the everyday inequalities that women experienced and had to deal with. These narratives converged in discourses that emphasized difference between men and women, fathers and mothers. Even though, when answering a direct question, (most of) the women embraced a vision of the genders as *equal, the same*, but what came through in practice and in less formal contexts was often the opposite. Arguably, this way of accounting for inequality can also be attributed to the strong individualist discourse that was gaining interpretative prerogative, and that I understand as linked to the neoliberal economy.

The insecurities as to how to solve the dilemmas of motherhood can be interpreted as one indicator of the process of change that Spain was continuously going through. As I have shown, with empirical examples on everything from the ambiguous feelings around breast-feeding to how one ought to see the father´s parental role, this transitional phase displays traces of a strong imagery around The Family (with The Mother as its stable core) as a secure guarantor of *confianza*, progressive ideas of the state as a professional, responsible actor, reminiscent of the political transition one generation earlier, and individualist discourses, also reminiscent of the socialist part in the transition, but favored by a neoliberal and insecure economy. The collisions and interweavings of all these tropes became very visible and readable in the talk and practices surrounding motherhood, and seemed to contribute to the tensions and ambiguities that led to the stress.

One partial solution to the women´s stressed situation seems obvious to an outsider – prolonged parental leave and well functioning, state financed day care. Setting

aside for a moment, the fact that politicians are not likely to implement these measures, the matter is more complex, due to three historical periods, not to say systems, colliding in the minds of people.

Among the Beniturian women there was consensus, with exceptions of course, that state parental allowance should be prolonged and improved, but the issue of day care seemed to be a more complex matter. The word *confianza* is key here. As shown, it has to do with known versus unknown, and it is clearly linked to values of family and individualism crashing and interweaving. Professionalism was only beginning to partly complement the old system of family relations, in whom one can feel complete *confianza*, trust. Gender roles are also changing, the most significant change being women´s entry into paid labour. Alongside this, there is a growing emphasis on and belief in individual *choice* (based on an individual desire) and the individual responsibility that follows from this – in line with neo liberal policies. Women are allotted and take on responsibilities in more areas than before, and are to make choices/take decisions that were not even an issue in their mothers´ generation – if to become a mother, if to give up work, if to engage a mother-in-law in child care. This does not stop others from opining, and from disapproving, and in the end women do not seem to perceive that they *own* their decisions. My work showed that those women who were not yet mothers, and who might not become mothers also had to relate to motherhood or not motherhood as an individual decision, as a choice.

All in all, choices when seen as free floating and based on an *individual desire*, makes the individual woman´s decision only hers and accordingly, she is to take full responsibility for that decision. And responsibilities that do not come with increased (at least sense of) power (over one´s life, over societal developments), I would argue, per se, cause a perception of stress. Therefore, it is all the more important to start contextualizing desire (Crompton 2006:13), without giving way to a reductionist and static conception of false consciousness.

So, apart from criticizing material/structural conditions, I have scrutinized the cultural meaning of concepts such as stress, responsibility, (individual) choice, desire and trust. Based on this exploration, I argue that we need to look into how the practices tied to these concepts actually bring meaning to individual women´s lives and how they (unintentionally) help maintain and deepen an unequal gendered power order. By culturally negotiating these concepts, the women in my study exercise a certain agency, and end up reclaiming motherhood as essentially different from fatherhood. This means that they are not just acting upon what is (not) being given to them, but also producing discourse.

This leads me back to the self-reflecting "choosing" modern subject, theorized by among others Anthony Giddens. He argues in terms of "the post-traditional order of modernity", in which the individual has to create her life trajectory based on a true "self" and in which relationships are "pure", not formed by "external" criteria, such as kinship, social duty or traditional obligation (1991:6).

Stevi Jackson criticizes thinkers on modernity, among them Giddens, for a tendency to equate reflexivity with individualization and choice, privilege and freedom from constraint and thereby missing the social and relational component, which, according to Jackson, is fundamental to the reflexive self. She bases her argument on George Herbert Mead´s distinction of an "I" and a "me", which, she argues, has been gravely misinterpreted as being about an individual versus a social part, of a person´s self. Discarding this assumption of a primitive pre-social "I" (Jackson 126-8:2010), she argues that to be self-reflexive has nothing to do with having liberated one´s "true" self from social constraints or convention, but is rather an ability to see these constraints, to reflect upon one´s life situation as part of a bigger whole.

Jackson´s argument fits well with the middle class women in my material who in many ways incarnated Giddens´ self-reflecting subject, but whom I read as driven by social convention in the form of a "prescriptive individualism" (Strathern 1992). In chapter two I let Soledad represent this subject. She constantly oscillated between "modern" discourses on the genders as equal and thus calling for a much more radical feminist politics, that not only implements laws but also makes sure to realize them in people´s lives, and a quite "conservative" way of acting out motherhood, "chosen" by her as "an individual", beyond gender.

In a similar manner, though not as clearly, many women expressed critical (political) views on how they would like family life and society to be organized to counter gender based inequalities, as opposed to how it is (not) organized in today´s liberalized economy. The examples ranged from wishes for prolonged parental leave (some wished for a gendered quota, for some this was not thinkable), some degree of state responsibility for child care, reserving state employments for women, more rigorous control of discrimination laws, educational efforts from pre-school level to make boys more sensitive to domestic- and care work, etc. These critical discourses existed parallel with an everyday discourse and, above all, practice, which spoke the opposite language of individual responsibility – not only for oneself, but for the children, the family life, the work, elderly relatives. Here the women often expressed that the responsibility was wished for, and acted out on the base of an authentic

desire, and lack of skills and will of male partners were attributed to factors beyond the individual man´s reach, and also helped to strengthen a gender complementary ideology.

I draw the conclusion, that the responsibility for the children is probably heavier to carry today than a generation ago, because the women also feel very responsible for not putting too much of a burden on the older generation *and* also, child care/upbringing, preparing children for adult life per se, is something much more specific than it used to be, separated from other spheres. Even though women, upon answering a direct question, expressed ideals of collective/societal solutions to the problems of individuals, they showed in all their doings and everyday rhetoric that they saw themselves as responsible and that they experienced loneliness in their responsibilities. But in some ways, they also emphasized that this responsibility is wished for, desired, and that everything one does, one does after all for oneself. So, while distancing themselves from neoliberal politics, simultaneously, in many ways they "do neo-liberalism"[52]. By taking on heavy responsibilities and by rationalizing choices as realized for oneself, for one´s own well-being, these women reinforce a politics that they are, at least in theory, opposed to. They engage in constant negotiations, in which they emphatically reclaim motherhood as something special, which gives meaning and joy to their lives, and contrast this to their mothers´ generation, who – as the daughters see it – had no choice. In this way, the women can be interpreted as agents, as enjoying a certain power.

Marilyn Strathern, in looking at how the individual has evolved during the last century, concludes that "….the individual…///… would vanish quite simply from the exercise of its individuality…///…prescriptive individual*ism* displaces the individuality of the person…" (Strathern 1992:148-152). Contradictory as it may seem, the search for the "authentic", "true" self, and the vanishing of the individual, fit well together, at least in my material. Women are convinced that they lead a better, more "true" life than their mothers did in that their possibilities to live according to their inner desires are much greater. They express this by emphasizing that they do things "for themselves", because they have chosen according to own desires. However, the great emphasis on insecurity as to who they are, who they should be, as mothers, as partners, as women, if they have made the "right" choices, reveal a fragmented perception of oneself as an individual.

Many, among others sociologist Beverly Skeggs (2004), have shown how individual choice is classed, in that it is intrinsically linked to material resources and to cultural capital in the Bourdieuan sense. As my material shows, it is clearly also gendered, in

[52] Meg Luxton uses this concept in her study on how neo-liberalism has impregnated Canadian every-day life

that women are expected to make other choices than men, and the burden of a gendered choice presented and experienced as individual choice can be more of a burden than an explicitly gendered one. By masking gendered choices as based on individual "personalities" – something that is most clearly visible in the negotiations around motherhood practices - what is made possible is a return to a gender complementarity, which probably would have been discarded as reactionary in the post-Franco period. This could easily be interpreted as backlash or reaction, but I have chosen to see it in a more complex way, as a logical response to the Spanish state failing women, despite a heavily emphasized feminist discourse.

Motherhood as Ortner´s "cultural projects" (2006) is fought for, and gives a vital meaning and purpose to my informants´ lives.[53] By reclaiming motherhood as a particular experience, and arguing for that society is failing mothers, the daughters of democracy construct their liberation in the area of tension between discursive equality and material and practical inequality. We may be looking towards a new Mother with a capital M, but as opposed to the Franco Mother, this one does not see her motherhood as sacrifice, but – despite a heavy individual responsibility accompanied by insecurities and stress – as a source of enjoyment.[54] Whether this "enjoyment" has perhaps become a duty in itself has been touched upon in this text but is a question worth exploring further.

[53] NB As said in the text, this does not go for all women; there are an increasing number who refrain from having children.
[54] This is not to say that mothers in the Franco- or transition period did not enjoy motherhood; rather that the emphases in discourse had moved from sacrifice to desire/choice.

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